LA VIDA RELIGIOSA

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AUTHORS

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To the Immaculate Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church and especially of souls consecrated to God

INDEX

GENERAL

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READER

The book that we are pleased to offer our readers today is the result of repeated requests from them. We were asked

and begged to complete our Theology of Christian Perfection-aimed at all kinds of readers: priests, religious and laity-with a new book in which we would expound the fundamental principles of the spirituality proper and specific to religious. The idea was not to supplant that other work, but to complete it with the elements that constitute the very essence of religious life. At first we proposed to simply add a chapter to our Theology of Perfection with these new elements that were requested of us. But we soon realized that a single chapter was insufficient to include the rich variety of aspects of the specific spirituality of religious life, and we could not think of adding several chapters without going beyond the framework of that work and making it lose its universalist character. It was therefore necessary to think of a separate book. This obliged us to examine more broadly the whole panorama of religious life, gathering together not only its strictly essential elements, but also some others of secondary importance, but intimately related to them. It seemed to us that in order to be complete, as far as possible, it was necessary to examine religious life in its triple aspect: canonical, theological and mystical. With this, the work was definitively outlined in its three parts, as we offer it today to our readers. However, we wanted to add some appendices that seem to us very practical and interesting, among which stand out the outline relative to the religious elaborated by the Second Vatican Council in the dogmatic constitution on the Church, and the precious booklet of Thomas of Kempis The Cloistered Discipline, which does not detract in any way next to the incomparable Imitation of Christ, attributed, as is well known, to the same distinguished medieval mystic. We wish to insist that the work we present to our readers today is complementary to our Theology of Christian Perfection, which it in no way attempts to supplant with regard to religious. This new work, without the former, would be very incomplete and would give an inaccurate and deformed vision of religious life. The religious, as well as the

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The priest and the laity must sanctify themselves principally on the basis of the elements common to every form of Christian life, namely: Trinitarian indwelling, incorporation into Christ, the sacraments, sanctifying grace, the infused virtues, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, fidelity to actual grace, prayer, *etc.* These are the fundamental elements, absolutely indispensable for every Christian, whatever the state or type of life in which he or she finds himself or herself. On these basic elements, it is possible to qualify certain secondary aspects that refer more directly-and some exclusively-to the priest, the religious or the lay person. In this work we gather the main aspects or nuances related to religious life, but leaving intact and giving first place to the basic and fundamental elements of Christian life in general. We warn our readers that a large part of the pages of this book are entirely beyond our poor wit. As you can see for yourselves, we have drawn extensively on the efforts of a multitude of authors, whom we quote extensively at every step. Truth is the common patrimony of mankind, so why not make use of the enlightenment of others for the common good that we all seek, provided, of course, that we are scrupulously careful to cite their true authors, so as to give to each his due, as justice demands and the most elementary honesty demands? We have often preferred the humble task of transcribing literally what others have thought of much better, as true specialists in the subject, to the vain prurience of wanting to be original in everything-or to appear to have an originality that, in reality, no one possesses at all-*. Some chapters are true anthologies of the best texts we have been able to find on the corresponding subject. We believe that our readers will be grateful to find systematically gathered in a single volume these precious

treasures scattered in a thousand different places, some of them very difficult, if not impossible, for most readers to acquire. We would also like to point out that we have written this book with only religious men and women in mind. This means that, although most of its chapters can be profitably used by members of secular institutes-who by express declaration of the Church also belong to the states of perfection-many of its pages are not adapted for them. Let no one seek in these pages what we did not intend to offer. Nevertheless

We are sure that many of them can be very useful not only to members of secular institutes, but also to diocesan priests and even to lay people of authentic and solid piety. We will be very grateful to our readers for any suggestions they may have for improving our modest work in future editions. It only remains for us to place these humble pages once again under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and of the Church, asking her to bless them and make them bear fruit for the greater glory of God and the sanctification of the souls consecrated to Him.

NOTE

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EDITION

The first edition of 15,000 copies was quickly sold out, and now appears the second edition, almost entirely identical to the previous one. The only novelty worthy of note is the inclusion, in the form of an appendix, of the magnificent decree Perfectae caritatis of the Second Vatican Council on religious life, which had not yet been promulgated when the first edition of this work appeared. We have preferred to give the conciliar text in its entirety-rather than include it fragmentarily in its respective places-so that the Council's teaching on religious life and its perfect correspondence with that which we have set forth in the preceding chapters may be seen in its totality. When the new Canon Code is promulgated, the first part of this work will have to be adapted to the new dispositions dictated by the Church; but, in the meantime, everything remains in force after the Second Vatican Council. May God, through the intercession of the sweet Virgin Mary, continue to bless these pages, which we have written solely for His glory and the sanctification of souls consecrated to Him.

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CANONICAL ASPECT OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

As we have just noted in our introductory words to the reader, in this first part of our work we will study the canonical aspect of religious life, not in its entirety-it would exceed by far the framework of our work and would not find its proper place here-but only those concrete points that refer to the individual life of religious*, In this exposition we will faithfully follow the order and orientation of the Canonical Code, collecting its principal canons verbatim and commenting on them in perfect agreement with the great specialists in the matter and, above all, with the teachings subsequently emanating from the Holy See through the Sacred Congregation for Religious,

PRELIMINARY NOCIONES Let us first gather together some general notions which must be constantly kept in mind when speaking of religious life in any of its aspects. They refer, principally, to the concept or notion of the religious state in general, to the canonical terminology referring to it, and to the precedence or place which religious should occupy in public gatherings. i.

Notion of the religious state

i. The Canon Code begins the treatise on religious with the following canon, which gives us a descriptive definition of the religious state: “The religious state, that is, the stable way of living in common, by which the faithful, in addition to the common precepts, also impose on themselves the

obligation to practice the evangelical counsels through the three vows of obedience, chastity and poverty, is to be held in great esteem by all" (en.487).

P.L Canonical aspect of religious life

According to this canonical definition, the essential elements of the religious state as such are the following: 1: 1. This is a generic element, essential to all states, whether canonical or not. Absolute or perpetual stability is not required, but relative or temporary stability (otherwise temporary religious profession would not constitute a state), provided that the initial intention of the religious to abandon the religious life at the expiration of the time of the vows is excluded. Common life. It is a positive element that depends on the will of the Church. In fact, it was not always necessary, as was the case with the Egyptian anchorites of the fourth century, who were true religious. Today the anchorite is no longer considered religious. The common life can be taken in two senses: a) insofar as it means social life and is opposed to individual life. In this sense, common life is absolutely essential to the religious state, which can exist only in an approved society. The religious ceases to be religious the moment he breaks the bond which unites him to his religionb) Insofar as it signifies cohabitation and is opposed to singular life. It supposes that the whole of life is practiced in common with the brethren of religion, living under the same roof, sharing the same table, clothing, etc., and subject to the yoke of a common religious discipline. In this sense, the common life is not absolutely essential for individual religious, who remain such even if they have been promoted to the episcopate or to another dignity (cn. 627 § 1), or are exclaustrated (en.639), apostates or fugitives (en.641), or expelled from perpetual vows (cn.672 § 1); but it is essential for religion, since religion, without common life in this sense of cohabitation, would lack certain things

which in present law belong to the integrity of the religious state.

3. . Evangelical counsels. The profession of the evangelical counsels, as a means of attaining Christian perfection, is essential to the religious state by the same divine right; it is an essential element of the religious state as a state of perfection. The evangelical counsels are, in themselves, free, since they are counsels and not precepts; but, by embracing them freely in a juridical state, they become morally and juridically obligatory. 4. Vows. In the Church, in fact, the religious state has never been conceived without this element of the vow, which constitutes the best means of professing the evangelical counsels and gives to the religious state the firmness required by its nature as a state. 1 Cf. Tabera, Antonana, Escudero, C. M. F., Derecho de los religiosos 4.a ed. (Madrid IQ62) n.3. Hereinafter we will cite this excellent work by the name of its first author (Tabera), in order to simplify quotations.

A peculiar element of the religious state is that the vows be public, that is, accepted by a legitimate superior in the name of the Church (011,1308 § 1). In this, among other things, the religious state is distinguished from other juridical states of perfection (societies of common life and secular institutes), which do not make public vows in the canonical sense of the word. The religious state, insofar as it signifies the exercise of evangelical perfection, that is, in its theological notion, is not accidental in the Church; it is something essential that cannot be lacking in her. It is of divine institution. In the second part of our work, when we

study the nature of the religious state theologically, we will return at length to these same ideas. 2*

Canonical terminology of the religious state

2. Canon 488 sets forth with complete clarity and precision the canonical terminology concerning the different modalities of the religious state. Here it is:

Religion is a society approved by legitimate ecclesiastical authority in which the members, according to the laws proper to the same society, take public vows, whether perpetual or temporary-which are to be renewed when the term for which they were taken expires-and thus tend to evangelical perfection. 2.

Order is the religion in which solemn vows are taken.

3. Monastic congregation is the union of several autonomous monasteries placed under the same superior. 4. Exempt religion is the religion of solemn or simple vows subtracted from the jurisdiction of the bishop or ordinariate of the place. Religious congregation, or simply congregation, is a religion where only simple vows, whether peipetual or temporal, are taken.

. Religion of pontifical right, the religion that has obtained the approval or at least the laudatory decree of the Holy See. Religion of diocesan right, that which has been erected by bishops or ordinaries, without having yet obtained the laudatory decree of the Holy See. 2 Cf. Tabera, o.c. n.4; Bouix, De iure regul. I p. 176; Cardinal Parrado y Garcia, Pastoral Letter on Religious Life p. 6; Pius XII, speech of February 11, 1958.

8. Clerical religion, the religion in which the greater part of its members are ordained priests; otherwise, lay3, 9. Religious house, the house of a religion in general. And a house is called a formed house if it is inhabited by at least six professed religious, of whom, in the case of a clerical religion, at least four are priests.

10. Province is called the union of several houses under the same provincial superior, forming part of the same religion. 11. Religious are all those who have made vows in any religion. Religious of simple vows are called those who have made vows in a religious congregation. They are called regulars if in an order. 12.

Sister is a religious sister with simple vows.

13.

Nuns, the religious of solemn vows; or, unless the nature of the thing or the context of the discourse indicates otherwise, the religious whose vows, by reason of their institute, are solemn, but, by disposition of the Apostolic See, in some places they are simple.

14.

Major superiors are as follows:

a) The abbot primate. b) The abbot superior of a monastic congregation. c) The abbot of an autonomous monastery, even if it belongs to a monastic congregation. d) The superior general of a religion. e) The provincial superior. f) The vicars of these and others whose power is equivalent to that of the provincials.

In addition to these divisions of religion brought by the Code, and which are those that have juridical effects worthy

of consideration, others can be mentioned, for example: a) By reason of the type of life: contemplative life, active life and mixed life. b) By the vow of poverty: mendicant and non-mendicant orders according to whether they cannot or cannot possess goods in common; although the Council of Trent allowed the mendicant orders to possess real estate, except for the Franciscans and Capuchins. 3 Many modern authors consider, with solid probability, that a religion continues to be clerical even if, at a given moment or because of special circumstances, the number of priestly members is less than that of the laity, and even if the clerics were very few; the character of the religion, established by the constitutions and acts of the Holy See, is fixed, not dependent on accidental changes.

C.l . Admission to religion

c) By reason of the specific purpose: teaching, missionary, hospital, military, *etc.*

As the Canon Code warns, "those things that are disposed relative to religious, even if they are expressed with masculine words, apply equally to religious women, unless the context or the nature of the matter indicates otherwise" (en.490), 3.

The precedence of the religious

3. As for precedence, that is, the right to occupy in public meetings, processions, etc., Religious precede the laity; clerical religious precede lay religious; canons regular precede monks; monks precede other regulars; regulars precede religious congregations; congregations of pontifical right precede those of diocesan right; and, within the same species, let us observe the provisions of canon 106, number 5. 4. But the secular clergy precede both the laity and the

religious outside their churches, and even within them if it is a matter of lay religion; but the cathedral or collegiate chapter everywhere precedes both” (can. 491). Chapter

i

ADMISSION TO RELIGION We will divide this first chapter into three sections: general requirements for admission to religious life, vocation to religious life, and postulancy to religious life. 1.

General requirements

4 Before speaking of admission to the novitiate and subsequent religious profession, the Canon Code establishes the general requirements for any admission in the following canon: “Any Catholic who lacks legitimate impediment, is moved by right intention and is fit to bear the burdens of religion can be admitted to religion” (canon 538). 4 Canon ro<5, number 5, establishes the following: “Between several moral persons of the same species and degree (e.g., between different confraternities, paternities, confraternities of the same degree), among different confraternities, pious unions, etc.) that which is in peaceful quasi-possession of precedence takes precedence, and, if it does not appear that it was first instituted in the place where the question originates; but among the members of a college the right of precedence will be determined in conformity with its own legitimate constitutions; lacking these, by legitimate custom, and, in its absence, by the prescriptions of common law*. :

P’L Canonical aspect of religious life

Therefore, the general conditions or requisites that are required for any person to be able to enter religion are four:
i. To be Catholic. For lack of this first and most essential

condition, anyone who is not duly baptized or who is an apostate, heretic or schismatic would be invalidly admitted to religious life. The religious state, as a state of perfection, presupposes Christian life in the Church. Baptized acatholics can make private vows; but before their reception into the bosom of the Catholic Church they cannot be validly admitted to the religious state. Neither can apostates from the faith, heretics or schismatics (cn. 1325 § 2), who, by excommunication (cn. 2314 § 2), are deprived of active and passive rights in the Church (cn. 22592267).

This general impediment is not to be confused with that which renders invalid the admission to the novitiate of those who adhere to an acatholic sect (can. 542,1.0). Here we are concerned only with the candidate’s being a Catholic at the present time.

2.0 Lack of legitimate impediments, established in general by the Canonical Code or in particular by the laws of a given religion for the validity or lawfulness of admission. 3.0 Right intention, that is, that the candidate does not intend to embrace the religious state for bastard or disordered motives (e.g., to obtain human honors, abundant food, comfortable life, etc.), but has, at least as a primary jin, a supernatural motive (e.g., greater security for his salvation, desire for a more perfect life, to work for the salvation of souls, to practice better charity toward his neighbor, etc.). It does not suppress this rectitude of intention to have other secondary ends of natural order (e.g., the desire of greater culture), or that it is of natural order what gave occasion to the supernatural intention (e.g., a reversal of fortune, a humiliation, the death of a loved one, etc.). 4.0 Suitability or aptitude for religious life. This refers to those endowments or qualities of soul and body (understanding, health, strength, etc.) required for religious life in a given institute and the offices or ministries to which it is dedicated. Any person who

fulfills these four conditions can be admitted to religion, but does not have the right to be admitted to a particular order or congregation. The latter always depends on free admission on the part of the legitimate superiors.

C.l. Admission to religion

Once this admission has been made, the candidate has the right not to be unjustly impeded by anyone (e.g., by fear, coercion, deception, etc.). The Church punishes with excommunication those who in any way force someone to embrace the clerical or religious state or to make solemn or simple religious profession, perpetual or temporary (en.2352). While it is not reprehensible, but highly praiseworthy, to encourage priestly or religious vocations by honest and truthful means (e.g., by showing their great spiritual advantages, their supernatural excellence, etc.), but without this involving the slightest physical or moral coercion of the presumed candidate L

2.

Religious vocation

5. In the second part of our work we will examine the problem of religious vocation from a theological point of view. Religious vocation, on the part of God, consists in an act of his divine providence, by virtue of which he chooses a person for this particular state within the Church and grants him the graces necessary to enter and persevere in it until death, if the chosen one does not become unworthy of them. On the part of man, this vocation or divine call is manifested by the set of natural and supernatural qualities that make him fit for the religious state. From the juridical point of view, any person who meets the four conditions enumerated in the canon just described can believe himself to have a

religious vocation and aspire, therefore, to be received into an order or congregation. These qualities, in fact, are the best external expression of the existence of the divine call or internal vocation, which is indispensable for entry into religion with guarantees of success. As Pius XII teaches, the call of God to embrace the priestly or religious state is so necessary that, if it is lacking, it must be said that the very foundation on which the whole edifice rests is lacking.

3. What should a person do if he has entered religion without a vocation to it, that is, without being called by God to this state of perfection? We must distinguish a threefold situation: a) If he entered in bad faith, that is, for base motives and knowing he had no vocation, he has sinned gravely and must

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Cf. Pius XII, encyclical Mentí nostrae, September 23, 1950. The Church has included in the Roman Missal a Mass uotiva to ask for and encourage religious touches. 2 Pius XII, Apostolic Constitution Sedes sapientiae: AAS 48 (1956) 357.

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leave the religious state as soon as possible, unless his internal dispositions have changed substantially and he is ready to fulfill his obligations with humility and submission to the grace of God, b) If he entered in good faith and realizes the lack of vocation when he is still in time to turn back (during temporary vows), he should not be hasty, since it may be a more or less prolonged temptation against the vocation that really exists. Pray fervently, consult your case with your superiors with filial confidence and do not return to the century unless the advisability of taking this step

appears with sufficient clarity. c) If he entered in good faith and becomes aware of the lack of vocation when he has already pronounced his solemn or perpetual vows, he could ask the Holy See for a dispensation from them (and he should even do so if the lack of vocation is manifest and indisputable, which will rarely happen after so many years have passed since he entered religion in good faith); But he could also-and this would be the best thing in most cases-humbly ask God for the graces necessary for the worthy fulfillment of his religious obligations, and strive with them to lead an exemplary conduct until death. What can never be justified, neither before God nor before men, is to lead an unobservant life with the excuse or pretext that one does not have a sufficient religious vocation, 4. What if one has lost a vocation that really existed at the beginning? There is no doubt that God never withdraws his gifts unless man makes himself unworthy of them. As St. Paul expressly says: “The gifts and vocation of God are irrevocable” (Rom 11:29), but it is no less certain that God can withdraw the actual graces with which a vocation is accompanied, as a punishment for unfaithful conduct. Inobservance, worldly spirit, manifest scandals, etc., are the path that leads almost inevitably to the loss of the vocation. “When the vocation has been lost, the remedy would be to work to merit from God the graces without which the fulfillment of religious duty becomes impossible or very difficult. Persevering prayer, mortification of the passions, humble submission to religious discipline, will be the best means to recover the lost vocation. There will be cases, however, in which the exit from religion will be the only advisable thing to free oneself from the situation to which one has arrived with the loss of the vocation. Then it may not be a sin to renounce the religious life, but the voluntary neglect that has led to such extremes will have been a sin. “3 3 Tapera, o.c. 11.192,5

C,l, Admission to religion

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Postulancy

* The name postulancy designates a certain period of preparation or probation that the candidate spends in a religious house before being admitted to the novitiate of the same order or congregation. Its purpose is to serve as a preparatory test, both on the part of the religion and of the candidate, to see if the novitiate can be undertaken with guarantees of success on both sides. With regard to the same, the Code of the Church determines the following: a)

Subject and time of postulancy

"§ x. In religions of perpetual vows, all women and, in the case of religions of men, all laymen, before their admission to the novitiate, are to make postulancy for at least six full months. In religions of temporary vows, they are to observe the constitutions regarding the necessity and time of postulancy. § 2. The major superior can extend the time prescribed for the postulancy, but not for more than another six months" (en.539).

It is easy to understand that this law must be carefully observed in all religious institutes that are affected by it. However, the postulancy does not affect the validity of the novitiate and subsequent profession, even in perpetually professed religions. Superiors, however, cannot dispense from it on their own, since it is a prescription of common law4. b)

Teacher and location

"The postulancy is to be made under the special direction of a proven religious, either in the novitiate house or in another

house of religion where discipline is diligently observed according to the constitutions” (540 §1).

By proven religious is understood any religious accredited for his prudence and virtue. If it is done in the novitiate house, it can be the master of novices himself, although it is not necessary. It is required that the house where the postulancy takes place be conspicuous for the observance of the constitutions and that there be no individuals in it who could sow in the souls of the postulants the seeds of relaxation even before the beginning of religious life. c)

Dress

“Postulants are to wear a modest dress different from that worn by novices” (cn.540 § 2). 4 Cf. n.8i; Schaefek, De religiosis 3.a ed. (Rome 1940) p.454.

P.I. Canonical aspect of religious life

It may be that of a lay person, another special habit or the religious habit itself, provided it differs in some way from that of the novices. d)

Closing

“In monasteries of nuns, the law of enclosure obliges the aspirants during the postulancy” (en.540 § 3).

The Sacred Congregation for Religious declared on November 7, 1916 that postulants in papal enclosed monasteries are not permitted to leave either to visit their relatives or for any other reason, and, if they do so, the permission of the bishop or ordinary of the place is not sufficient, but they require that of the Holy See (AAS 8,446). However, if they were to leave without permission, they would sin, but they would not incur the excommunication

prescribed in canon 2342,3 against nuns who leave the enclosure illegitimately. The postulants are not yet nuns. On February 6, 1924, the same Sacred Congregation declared that the aspirants can leave the monastery freely and without license of the Holy See when it happens that they themselves spontaneously return to the century or are dismissed by the superiors (AAS 16,96 III e)> They are not allowed to leave the enclosure on the occasion of taking the habit or making profession (AAS 48,516 n.19). However, the local ordinary can, as is obvious, permit postulants to leave the cloister in urgent cases in which, according to canon 601 § 2, he can authorize professed women to do so. For an aspirant to enter the cloister to begin her postulancy, she does not need the permission of the Holy See: the permission of the local bishop is sufficient and necessary (AAS 16,96 IV), or that of the religious superior, if she is subject to him. There is no inconvenience in that the postulants are dispersed in different monasteries. e)

Practices of piety

“The postulants, before they begin the novitiate, should practice spiritual exercises for at least eight full days, and, according to the prudent judgment of the confessor, they should make a general confession of their whole life” (en. 541).

It is understood that any preparation is always too little for such a transcendental step as that of entering religion.

C.2. The Novitiate

Chapter 2

The novitiate is the time of probation that every candidate for religious profession must undergo in a particular house of religion under the care of a master specially appointed for this purpose. Its purpose is the theoretical and practical knowledge of the duties and obligations that the candidate will contract in making his profession, to see whether or not he has the strength to carry them out. On the part of the religion, the novitiate allows to verify if the aspirant meets or not the conditions to be able to be admitted to the profession with guarantees of success. The novitiate ordinarily begins with the taking of the habit (cf. can. 553) and ends with the first profession. It is so necessary that it cannot be omitted in any case or under any pretext, on pain of invalidity of profession. We will study the canonical legislation concerning the novitiate in two articles: i.° .2.°.

Requirements for admission to the novitiate. Elements of the novitiate.

Finally, in a third article, we will present the main practical norms for the formation of novices.

Article i

REQUIREMENTS TO BE ADMITTED TO THE NOVICIATE The Canon Code establishes two kinds of requirements: some of a negative type, that is, impediments that make the novitiate invalid or illicit; and others of a positive type, that is, conditions that are demanded of the aspirant to the novitiate. 1.

Impediments rendering the novitiate invalid

8. Before enumerating them (can. 542), the Code assumes that the postulancy has been completed, the omission of which, when necessary, would make admission to the novitiate illicit (although not invalid). One must also take into account the prescriptions of the constitutions of the religious order or congregation, which can add impediments that affect the validity or licitness of the novitiate, as long as they are not contrary to the Code. The dispensation

If the constitutions say nothing, they are understood to be reserved to the Holy See. Here is what the Code (cn. 542) states in detail: “Subject to the provisions of canons 539-541 (concerning the postulancy) and other prescriptions in the constitutions of each religion, the following are invalidly admitted to the novitiate: i. Those who have adhered to an acatholic sect.

As the Commission for the Interpretation of the Code expressly declared, this is not to be understood of those who, moved by divine grace, passed from the heresy or schism into which they were born into the Catholic Church, but of those who, after having abandoned the faith, joined an acatholic sect (AAS 11,477). k By acatholic sects are understood here not only heretical or schismatic sects, but also pagan religions and atheism constituted as a sect (AAS 26,494). Neither socialism nor communism as such are acatholic sects, since they are not properly religious sects, even if they are enemies of Catholicism. The same is true of Freemasonry, carbonarii, etc., although those who give their name to them incur excommunication (cf. can. 2335). This adherence does not mean the simple loss of the Catholic faith, even if it is public; nor merely internal adherence to a

sect, since the Church does not judge in the external sphere internal acts, which are sin, but not a crime; nor does the external hidden one, which is sufficient, however, to incur excommunication (cf. cn. 2314 § 1, i,° and 2.0). External and public adherence is required, which carries with it ascription as a member of the sect or an act that is equated with the same. 2.0

Those under the age required for the novitiate*.

Canon 555 requires for the validity of the novitiate that the candidate must be fifteen years of age at the beginning of the novitiate. The years are to be computed according to the norm of canon 34, § 3, 3.3°, that is, the day of birth is not counted, unless the birth coincides with the beginning of the day itself, which in practice is impossible to prove. And so, he who was born, v.gn, on the 20th of January, cannot begin the novitiate until the 21st of January of the year in which he becomes fifteen years of age. A single day's advance is sufficient to invalidate the novitiate. The Code does not indicate any age limit beyond which the novitiate cannot begin. But in some particular constitutions limits are placed (e.g., until the age of thirty-five or forty), so that the novitiate may not begin after the age of fifteen.

C.2. The Novitiate

that only for grave reasons and with the opportune dispensation can those who have exceeded this age be admitted. The constitutions can also indicate, for the validity or lawfulness of the novitiate, an age higher than that established by the Code, but not lower than the same. 3.0
Those who enter religion induced by violence, grave fear or deceit, or those who receive the superior induced in the same manner.

a) The violence that renders the novitiate invalid need not be physical, e.g., by locking him in the novitiate; it is sufficient that it be moral, e.g., by forcing him to enter the novitiate in order to be free from the mistreatment and humiliation to which he is subjected for not entering. Those who in any way force a man or a woman to enter religion incur ipso fado excommunication (cn. 2352). b) The disabling fear must be grave: either absolutely (that is, for all classes of persons), or relatively

(that is, for the concrete person whom it affects). And it must be external, that is, produced by a cause that is outside the subject; which must be free, since the one produced by a necessary cause is equated to the intrinsic one. The simple reverential fear (e.g., the one suffered by the son before the displeasure of his father) can in certain circumstances invalidate the novitiate. c) By fraud is understood every kind of cunning, deceit, artifice, etc., used to involve, surprise or deceive another. Fraud tends to induce error. If it is substantial, the act is invalid by natural and positive law (en. 104). If the error produced is accidental, the act is valid, although rescindable by general principle (en. 103). However, entry into the novitiate is ‘invalid.

Fraud is not just any lie told in passing and without perceiving its significance; it requires a certain amount of calculation and intent to deceive. 4.0

The spouse during the marriage.

Entry into religion is invalid even if it is done with the free consent of the other spouse. The impediment is removed only by pontifical indult. If the marriage is only rato (that is, not consummated by the carnal act), it is dissolved upon the pronouncement of solemn vows, and the other spouse can contract a new marriage (cf. en. 1119). If the marriage was

consummated, the dispensation from impediment is not valid.

The marriage is granted with great difficulty and requires: a) the free consent of the other spouse; b) the other spouse must also enter into religion; or take a private vow of perpetual chastity. In no way can one remarry while his or her religious spouse is living, since a valid and consummated marriage cannot be dissolved by any human power or by any cause other than death (cn.m8). 5.0 Those who are or were bound by the bond of religious profession,

a) Apostates and fugitives, exclaustrated and those expelled from perpetual vows who, according to common law, remain bound by religious vows (00,639. 045.669). b) Those secularized, those expelled or dispensed from temporary vows or those who left the religion at the end of those vows were bound. Note that it is not a question here of transit to another religion, which has its own formalities (01,632-636), but of entering a religion after having belonged to the same or another. They could only do so with special dispensation of the impediment by the Holy See.

This canonical impediment affects only those who were professed in some religion; it does not affect simple postulants or novices, unless the constitutions themselves determine otherwise,

6. Those who are threatened by a penalty for having committed a grave crime, of which they were or can be accused. A grave offense is a homicide, adultery, a very notable theft, etc., of which they have been accused or can be accused by civil or canon law. It does not concern,

therefore, a crime that is completely hidden or committed without witnesses, the accusation of which is impossible or very difficult. The threat of punishment must be imminent, that is, the candidate must be in near, nb remote, danger of being condemned. 7. a The bishop, both residential and titular, even if he is only designated by the Roman Pontiff.

The reasons for the impediment are: 1. a The bishop, by reason of the episcopate, is in a state of exercising acquired perfection, and the religious state is an inferior state of perfection to be acquired. 2. a Bishops, even titular bishops, have contracted a very close bond with their church or diocese, from which only the Roman Pontiff can free them.

C.2. The Novitiate

3º The bishop has received a mission from the Roman Pontiff, and reverence for the Vicar of Christ demands that he not disregard it without his express permission,

8º Clerics who by disposition of the Holy See are obliged by oath to render their services in favor of their diocese or of the missions, for the duration of the obligation of the oath* This impediment affects those who are educated in certain colleges of Rome and also those who are obliged to the service of the missions, if they add the clause of not entering religion without the permission of the Holy See. The oath imposed by the bishop before ordination, to give oneself to the service of the diocese or of the missions, is certainly valid; but it does not induce impediment to enter religion, since it is not issued “by disposition of the Holy See.” Nor does this impediment apply to clerics who have taken the oath referred to in canons 117,3; 956 and 981 § 1, since they do not take it “by disposition of the Holy See”, but by prescription of law. The latter oath is perpetual insofar as it compensates for the perpetual right to food, but

not insofar as it prohibits the renunciation of this right by entering into religion* 2* 2.

Impediments that make the novitiate unlawful

9* The Canon Code prescribes the following (en,542,2.°): Illicitly, but validly, the following are admitted: i.° Clerics ordained “in sacris”, if they enter without consulting the local ordinary or if he himself opposes their leaving the diocese because their leaving the diocese would cause grave harm to souls, which cannot be avoided in any other way*’.

This impediment affects only those ordained in sacris, not other clerics, much less simple seminarians. It imposes only the obligation to consult the bishop, not to obtain his consent. The bishop, however, can object, but only for the reason alleged in the canon, which will rarely or almost never be given in practice. The judgment as to the existence of this reason belongs to the bishop, but the candidate can appeal against this judgment to the Holy See (to the Sacred Congregation for Religious). If the reason for refusing consent is any other (v*gr., the fact of having been educated at the expense of the diocese or seminary), the impediment does not bind: the candidate can, without further ado, enter religion after having consulted the same bishop without obtaining his conformity or approval V. 1 Cf. Tabera, o.c. n.199,1.

P.I. Canonical aspect of religious life 2.

Those who have debts they cannot pay.

The intention of the legislator is to prevent the creditor from being unjustly harmed by the debtor’s entry into religion, or the religion from suffering disturbance, litigation or scandal. The impediment ceases if the creditors renounce their right,

or if the debt can be paid little by little within a given period of time, or if the religion takes the debt upon itself. If the superiors knowingly and unlawfully admitted the candidate with debts, they are obliged to satisfy the creditors who demand payment of the debts. If there was no bad faith in the admission, they would not be obliged. 3.0 Those obliged to render accounts or who are involved in other secular business, from which the religion may fear lawsuits and inconvenience*.

To render accounts refers to some civil or ecclesiastical administration, public or private. By secular business is understood lawsuits, public offices, political obligations, etc.; it would be convenient for the one involved in such accounts or business to settle all these before entering into religion, even if there were not to be feared any inconvenience to it, 4.0 Children who have to succor their ascendants, that is, their father or mother, grandfather or grandmother, who are in serious need; and parents whose help is necessary to feed or educate their children.

Given the importance of this impediment, we shall treat it in detail2, 1. The need is common when it causes slight inconvenience or is easy to avoid. It is serious when life cannot be preserved without great difficulty or without complete decay and to the detriment of one's own state.3 And it is extreme when there is danger of death if one is not helped in a short time. The canonical impediment refers only to grave physical necessity and, a fortiori, to extreme or quasi-extreme necessity. It does not consider moral or ordinary physical necessity. But natural law also covers moral necessity, as we shall explain below. 3. Notwithstanding the serious and certain physical need of the parents, the impediment does not oblige: a) When, remaining in the world, the child would not be able to help them because he has nothing with which to do so, nor

prudently expects to have it. Rarely, however, can a child be considered free when he or she is not able to help them because he or she does not have the means to do so, nor can he or she prudently expect to have it. 3 Thus, the son cannot be considered free to take his father or mother to an asylum, if this appears unseemly given his social condition.

C.2. The Novitiate

b) In case of serious and certain danger of moral perversion, especially if the parents themselves are the cause. c) If, in spite of entering into religion, he can sufficiently help them. d) If there are other children who can and want to help them.

4. Although the canon does not allude to the moral necessity of the parents, the natural law also includes this necessity (e.g., if the presence of the son or daughter is necessary for the conversion of the parents or to avoid their moral perversion). But to determine the illicitness of the entrance in religion by reason of the spiritual necessity of the parents, several things must be taken into account: a) The origin of that necessity: if it is the fragility or a voluntary and stubborn impiety. b) The spiritual harm of the son or daughter in leaving or deferring the vocation. c) The edification or scandal that the entrance can produce. d) The spiritual help that the son can give to the father, if it will be more effective remaining in the world or entering religion to immolate himself before God, *etc.*

5. The Code does not speak either of siblings, whose need does not constitute, by the same token, a canonical impediment. But, according to the doctrine of the best moralists, in the extreme need of the same, admission should be deferred until the need disappears; in grave need, it should be deferred if the siblings are not under the care of the parents and can be helped with the delay. ó. With regard

to the obligation to leave religion to help relatives, a distinction must be made: a) Before profession, one must leave it to help one’s parents who are in extreme or grave need, unless the reasons are given which, as we have said, would make the entrance licit. b) After profession, if it is a question of extreme and certain necessity that the religious and only he could help by leaving, he should leave religion for a certain time-until the necessity is remedied-, in agreement with his superiors, unless these, very laudably, take charge of remedying the necessity in order to avoid the religious the trouble of leaving. If it is a matter of grave necessity, but not extreme, he could request the temporary dispensation; but it does not appear that he is strictly obliged to do so,

7. As for entering into religion without parental consent (not constituted in grave necessity), children can do so freely, even against their parents’ opposition. In order to follow a vocation, consent is not necessary, not even the advice of parents, although it is good to ask for it, if there is hope of obtaining it, in order to carry things out gently and without violence. The parents who oppose capriciously and without any rational reason (e.g., for false sentimentality)

to the priestly or religious vocation of their sons commit a very grave sin, and their sons are not obliged to obey them in this. In Spain, article 321 of the Civil Code, reformed by the law of December 20, 1952, recognizes the right of daughters of legal age (twenty-one years old) to enter religion even without parental permission.

8. Parents cannot enter religion as long as their help is necessary for the feeding or education of their unemancipated children, unless provision has been made for

both; e.g., by leaving them in the care of a competent person and of every guarantee. 5.0 Those destined to the priesthood in religion, if they have some irregularity or canonical impediment that prevents them from reaching it.

The irregularity coming from the illegitimate birth does not prevent the entrance in a religious order, because it ceases automatically by the solemn profession (in.984,1°). In religions of simple profession, it is necessary to be legitimized or to obtain a dispensation from the irregularity. For other irregularities and impediments (cf. can. 983991), prior dispensation must be obtained before licitly beginning the novitiate, even if they are irregularities or impediments that are easily dispensed. The legislator does not want superiors to anticipate the judgment of the Holy See by presuming dispensation.

6. Orientals in the Latin religions, without a written license from the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Church. The principal reason for this impediment is the necessity of changing the rite, which cannot be done without a license from the Holy See. 3*

Effects of admission without waiver of impediments

10. Two kinds of effects must be distinguished: penal and non-criminal h 1. Regarding the penal ones, canon 2411 establishes the following: “Religious superiors who admit to the novitiate a candidate who is not suitable, contrary to what is prescribed in canon 542, or without the required testimonial letters, contrary to what is prescribed in 544, and those who admit them to profession in violation of what is prescribed in 571 § 2, are to be punished proportionally to the gravity of the fault, without excluding deprivation of office”.

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Cf. Tabeka, o.c. n.200.

C.2. The Novitiate

The punishment referred to in this canon must be imposed by the superiors of the religion themselves, even by those who are not exempt*. 2:

i. The invalidating impediment renders invalid the admission, the novitiate and, therefore, the profession, even if it was concealed through ignorance; all the more so if it was done with malice. Consequently: a) During the novitiate, if the impediment ceases by itself (such as age) or by dispensation, the novitiate begins to be valid from the time the impediment ceased. If it is one of those that cannot or usually are not dispensed, the novice must be dismissed. b) Once the profession is made, the professed can be dismissed, or the profession can be validated (if the impediment suffers) by healing by the Holy See, or by a new legitimate issue once the nullity is known and the impediment is removed (en.586). 2*° The impediment does not invalidate the novitiate or profession, unless it has been fraudulently concealed, in which case the admission would be null, even if the superior has been deceived by the fraud of a third person (e.g., the candidate’s father). The same would have to be said if the constitutions condition the will to admit, on the part of the superiors, to the sincere manifestation of the impediments, if the impediment was culpably concealed, even without reaching the extreme of fraud* a) During the novitiate. Although the impediments do not invalidate the novitiate, dispensation from them must be requested, even if the novitiate has begun. The superior would not be obliged to ask for the dispensation and could dismiss the novice, especially if he culpably concealed the

impediment, or the error was a cause for the superior to admit it. b) After profession, if it was valid, the superior cannot dismiss the professed; but it could be a cause to ask for the dispensation from the vows or to prevent the renewal of the vows*.

4. 11.

To whom corresponds the right to admit The Canon Code establishes the following:

“The right to admit to the novitiate and to subsequent religious profession, whether temporary or perpetual, belongs to major superiors with the vote of their council or chapter, according to the particular constitutions of each religion” (en.543). 2 By this is understood-in forensic terminology-the declaration of the will of one approving and confirming the validity of an act that another did on his behalf.

P.I. Canonical aspect of religious life

The following should be noted about this canon: i. It deals with the internal superiors of the religion, excluding the external ones, such as, e.g., the bishop or local ordinary, even in the case of religions of diocesan right, and the provincial or religious ordinary with regard to the religions that are subject to him. However, according to some authors - others agree - the bishop could prevent the admission of a certain candidate if he has a grave and objective cause for it, known to his office. 2.0 The right to admit belongs to the major superior. The constitutions will determine in each religion which major superior is involved (general, provincial, etc.). This major superior can delegate to another the faculty to admit, but only in particular cases, not habitually. 3.0 For the validity of an admission, the

deliberative or consultative vote, according to the constitutions, of the council or of the chapter, or of both at the same time, if so prescribed by the constitutions, is always required for the validity of the admission. The council or chapter is the local, provincial, or general council, according to the constitutions. 4.0 The major superior cannot admit a candidate rejected by the council or chapter when their vote is deliberative. On whether or not he can reject the one admitted by them, the authors argue. The constitutions of some orders (e.g., the Dominican) expressly grant him this right. 5.

Documents required for admission

12. Apart from those which may be required by the constitutions of a particular religious institute, the Canon Code indicates the following, which are binding on all of them without exception: i.°.

Baptismal and confirmation certificates:

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“All aspirants, before being admitted to any religion, must present a certificate of baptism and confirmation” (en.544 §1).

In this regard, the following should be noted: a) The two testimonies can be given by the parish priest in a single document; taking it from the baptismal book, in which the marginal note of confirmation should appear. The seal of the episcopal curia is not necessary, and it can be given to the person concerned or to another person in his place. b) If the candidate is not yet confirmed, he should receive this sacrament, if possible, before being admitted to the novitiate (not before the postulancy). If he is not post

C.2. The Novitiate

c) If it is impossible to obtain the documents because they have been destroyed by fire, war, etc., the testimony of having received them made by a witness of any guarantee, or by the oath of the interested party himself, e.g., of having heard it from his parents, etc., would be sufficient (cf. cn.779.800). (cf. cn.779.800). Moral certainty must be reached by careful investigation, without recourse to the Holy See. 2,0

Testimonial letters for male applicants:

“Male aspirants must also present testimonial letters from the ordinary of origin (cf. en.90) and from any other place in which, after attaining the age of fourteen, they have resided for more than one year morally continuous, any contrary privilege having been suppressed” (cn.544 § 2).

A morally continuous year is usually understood to be one that has not been interrupted for more than one month. “If it is a matter of admitting those who have been in a seminary, college, postulancy or novitiate of another religion, testimonial letters are required, in addition, given, according to the different cases, by the rector of the seminary or college, having heard the local ordinary, or by the major superior of the respective religion” (can. 544.3).

According to the decree issued jointly by the Sacred Congregation for Religious and the Congregation for Seminaries and Universities on July 25, 1941, in regard to this canon, before those who for any reason have left or have been dismissed from the seminary are admitted, the religious superiors must have recourse to the Sacred Congregation for Religious, which will make known to them the judgment it has formed on the case, once it has taken

the steps it deems opportune. In the case of seminarians who leave the seminary precisely to embrace the religious state (even as laymen), this recourse is not necessary: the favorable testimonials of the rector are sufficient. According to the opinion of several authors, with solid reasons, the word colegiof used in this paragraph refers only to the colleges destined for the formation of aspirants to the priesthood or to the religious state; not to the other colleges: of education, even if they are run by priests or religious. “For the admission of clerics, in addition to the certificate of ordination, the testimonials of the ordinaries of the ordinaries in whose dioceses they have

The following is to be observed: “A professed religious who has remained morally continuous for more than one year after ordination, except as provided for in § 3” (en.544.4). “For a professed religious who, with apostolic indult, passes to another religion, the testimony of the major superior of the former religion is sufficient” (en.544 § 5). “In addition to the testimonies required by law, superiors, who have the right to admit aspirants, can require some other testimonies if they deem them necessary or opportune for the purpose” (en. 544.6).

In some religions, e.g., certificates of studies completed, of good health, etc., are required. “Finally, women are not to be admitted without first having diligently informed themselves about their character and customs, and what is ordered in § 3 remains firm” (can. 544, §7).

In summary: by virtue of common law, only the following documents are required for religious: a) Baptismal and confirmation certificates. b) Testimonial letters of the major superior if they were in a religious college (not of simple

religious or general education), postulancy or novitiate of another religion. The inquiries about the nature and customs of the aspirant religious-which this canon 544 § 7 prescribes-must be made by the admitting superior; not by the local ordinary, since he is not the one who admits. With regard to testimonials in general, the following points should be noted: 1. a Obligation to ask for them. It is obligatory for all religious superiors to ask for the corresponding testimonials, even if they know sufficiently well the one who asks to be admitted, in virtue of the general principle established in canon 21. This is a grave obligation, as is evident from the penalties with which canon 2411 threatens violators, which can go as far as deprivation of office. 2. a Obligation to give them:

Those who, by prescription of law, are obliged to give the testimonial letters, shall not give them to the aspirants themselves, but shall send them free of charge to the religious superiors, closed and sealed, within one quarter from the date on which they were requested, and, in the case of those who have been in a seminary, college, postulancy or novitiate of another religion, reinforced by the superior with an oath. § 2. If for grave reasons they judge that they cannot answer the request for testimonials, they are to explain the reasons to the Apostolic See within the aforesaid time limit, § 3. If they answer that they do not know the aspirant sufficiently, the religious superior shall supply the reason by means of another diligent investigation and a reliable report. But if they answer nothing, the superior who asked for the testimonials will inform the Holy See".

C.2. The Novitiate

3. to Content of the details of the same Code:

same.

Determines it with everything

“In their testimonial letters, after they have made careful inquiries, including the use of secret information, having their conscience seriously pricked as to the truth of what they report, they must inform about the birth, habits, wit, life, fame, condition and science of the aspirant; if he is subject to inquisition, if he is bound by any censure, irregularity or other canonical impediment, :if his family needs his help and, finally, in the case of those who have been in a seminary, college, postulancy or novitiate of another religion, for what reason they were dismissed or left spontaneously” (en.545 § 4).

4. a

Rigorous secrecy.

This is also required by the canonical code itself: “All those who receive the above-mentioned information are strictly obliged to keep secret the news received and the persons who provided it” (can. 546).

6.

Special requirements for nuns

13* In addition to the general requirements mentioned above, the Code establishes two other special requirements for nuns: the dowry and the examination of their will to verify whether they enter the monastery freely and with knowledge of what they are doing. r.°.

The dowry

1. Nature. A dowry is understood to be the capital, a sum of money or temporal goods, determined by law, which the postulant takes with her when she enters religion for the support of her person. The dowry consists of a fixed and fruitful capital, as required by the purposes of the dowry. Therefore, any other non-fixed or non-fruitful capital that is given, e.g., for some need of a professed sister, or what is agreed upon for food during the novitiate, would not be a dowry. Neither should be considered as dowry the movable or fungible goods that are taken for the use of the nun, clothes, *etc.* 2.

Purpose.

The dowry is constituted with a double purpose: 1.a The good of the nun herself: to provide for her sustenance with the income from the capital from her profession until her death in the religion or her departure from it; and so that, in the event of

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Cf.

Tabera, o.c. n.207$s.

to get out of religion, can, with the restitution of capital, live honestly, at least for some time, as long as he can find other means of livelihood.

2. a The good of the religion, since it is helped, even if only in part, to support the nun during her lifetime; it is freed, at least in part, from the moral obligation to provide for the needs of the nun who leaves; and, finally, the goods of the

religion are increased by the irrevocable acquisition of the dowry upon the death of the nun. 3. Obligatory nature:

In monasteries of nuns, the postulant must bring the dowry determined by the constitutions or by legitimate custom. § 2. Before taking the habit, the dowry is to be delivered to the monastery, or at least its delivery is to be assured in a form valid under civil law. § 3. In religions with simple vows, the provisions of the constitutions concerning the dowry of the nuns are to be observed. § 4. The dowry indicated cannot be condoned either totally or partially without the indult of the Holy See, in the case of a religion of pontifical right; without the permission of the local ordinary, in the case of a religion of diocesan right.

In the constitutions of many religions it is usually admitted that the dowry can be condoned when it is a question of a postulant who lacks the means to constitute it, but presents some diploma or title of studies, or is adorned with special aptitudes by which it is presumed that she will be very useful to the religion, *etc.* But it is necessary to ask for an indult, since in these cases it is not a question of a dispensation from the constitutions^-which could be done by the superiors-, but of a dispensation from the Canon Code, which is reserved to the Holy See or to the local ordinary, according to the case, 4.

Placement and conservation.

The Code establishes the following

After the first profession of the nun, the superior, with her advice and with the consent of the local ordinary and that of the regular superior, if the house depends on the latter, should place her dowry in safe, licit and fruitful securities; but it is absolutely forbidden to spend it in any way before

the nun dies, not even to build a house or to pay debts" (en. 549). "The ordinaries of the place will diligently watch over the conservation of the endowments of the nuns; and above all in the holy visitation they will demand that they be given an account of them" (en.550 § 2).

These are grave obligations. Canon 2412 imposes on the local ordinary the obligation to punish, even with the first degree of imprisonment.

C.2. The novitiate

The superior (even if exempt) who dares to spend, in any way, the dowries of the maidens received, if the case demands it. 5.

Administration.

It is indicated in the Code as follows

canon: "The endowments must be carefully and entirely administered in the monastery, or in the house where the superior general or provincial usually resides" (en.549 § 1).

In the monastery, in the case of nuns; in the house of the general or provincial superior in the case of sisters. The administration implies: to keep the accounts, to collect the revenues in due time, to watch over the placement so that it is licit, safe and fruitful, to propose and execute the change when it is convenient, keeping in mind, when making the conversions of titles, the norms of the civil law; if with license something of the dowry has been used, to take care of replacing it as soon as possible, *etc.* 6.

Restitution.

“A professed religious, whether in solemn or simple vows, who leaves the institute, for whatever reason, is to have her dowry restored in full, without the revenues already due” (can. 551.1).

The only condition for restitution is the permanent or definitive departure; it does not matter if it is licit or illicit, voluntary or imposed. Therefore, the dowry would have to be returned even to the apostate nun, when it is known for certain that she does not want to return to the monastery. If the revenues were collected, e.g., every half year, and there was still some time to receive the revenues following the departure of the nun, they would have to be divided pro rata between her and the monastery according to the time elapsed in the monastery since the last revenues were received. “If a professed nun passes with apostolic indult to another religion, during the novitiate the fruits of the dowry must be given to the new religion (except as established in canon 570, § i); and, after she professes, also the dowry itself. If he passes to another monastery of the same order, the dowry is to be given to him from the very day of transit” (can. 551.2).

Canon 570 § 1, alluded to in the parenthesis, establishes that “nothing can be required for the expenses of the postulancy or novitiate, unless the constitutions or an express agreement made at the beginning of the postulancy or novitiate authorize charging the amount for food and the religious habit”.

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P.L Canonical aspect of religious life 7.

Acquisition.

“The dowry irrevocably becomes the property of the monastery, or of the religion, upon the death of the nun, even if she had only taken temporary vows” (en.548).

When the professed nun dies, the property becomes irrevocable, absolute, in favor of the monastery or of the religion (according to the constitutions). The goods of the dowry become free goods, common, without the peculiar character of the dowries. For the same reason, they can legitimately be alienated, spent, etc., according to the law. The dowry of the novice who dies during the novitiate is not acquired by the religion, even if the novice has made profession in the article of death. It must be returned to her legitimate heirs. 2.0

The exploration of the will

The second special requirement for the religious is that of the prior examination of her will. It consists of a canonical examination aimed at ascertaining the freedom and right intention of the religious to enter into religion. The superior of religious, even if they are exempt, must communicate to the local ordinary, at least two months in advance, the forthcoming admission to the novitiate and to profession, whether temporary or perpetual, solemn or simple. § 2. The local ordinary or, if he is absent or impeded, another priest commissioned by him, shall, at least thirty days before the novitiate and before the professions as above indicated, carefully and gratuitously explore the will of the aspirant, without entering the cloister, asking her if she has been coerced or deceived and if she knows what she is doing. And if her pious and free will is fully established, the aspirant may be admitted to the novitiate or the novice to profession” (en.552).

If the examination is favorable, the ordinary can neither forbid nor impose admission: this always belongs to the superior. If it is unfavorable, the ordinary can strictly oppose the admission and the superior cannot admit the postulant, although she could keep her for some time to test or instruct her. The obligation established in the first paragraph consists simply in communicating to the local ordinary, at least two months in advance, the admission to the novitiate or the temporary or perpetual profession of the religious. Once the communication has been made, the obligation of the superior ceases. If the ordinary does not make the expio

C.2. The Novitiate

If the postulant has not been examined, she is not obliged to do more and can admit the postulant to the novitiate without the necessity of delaying it because the examination has not been made. The obligation of examination is in itself grave, as is evident from its purpose and from the penalty with which the superior who culpably omitted to communicate it to the ordinary is punished (cf. in 2412). However, it is not necessary for the validity of the admission, but only for its lawfulness. Nothing can be demanded by the exploration of the will, even if there is a centuries-old and immemorial custom against it. Although it is licit to receive what the nuns offer spontaneously on this occasion (e.g., for travel expenses, if there were any). Article z

ELEMENTS OF THE NOVICIATE The Canon Code determines with precision the fundamental elements of the novitiate in any religious institute, leaving, however, ample margin to the constitutions themselves for complementary details, some of which may even affect the validity of the novitiate. Here we will only take up the norms of the canonical code, with small glosses or comments b I*.

Place of novitiate

14* The novitiate is to be made precisely in the novitiate house, erected according to the following canonical norms: “§ 1. The novitiate house is to be erected according to the constitutions; but in the case of a religion of pontifical right, a license from the Apostolic See is necessary for the erection of such a house. 2. If the religion is divided into provinces, several novitiate houses cannot be designated in the same province, except for a grave cause and with special apostolic indult. 3. Superiors are not to place in houses of novitiate and houses of studies except religious who are exemplary in their dedication to regular observance” (can. S54)*.

Regarding this canon, the following should be noted: a) It is not required that each province have its own novitiate. Several provinces can have a common novitiate, and it would even be convenient if the scarcity of novices or other reasonable cause were to recommend it. 1 With few exceptions, we take the commentaries of Tabbra, Derecho de los religiosos 4.1 ed. (Madrid 1962), and of Schaefer, De religiosis 3.a ed.

b) For the same province to have more than one novitiate house, a grave cause is required (e.g., diversity of languages, of climates, excessive extension of the province, etc.) and, in addition, the express permission of the Holy See. c) The religious assigned to the house, novitiate or study house must be of impeccable conduct, so that they may serve as an example to the young novices or students. Those who are not observant cannot be assigned for their punishment, nor to remove them from the occasion of relapse (cf. can. cn.The Code also prescribes the separation between novices and professed: “As far as possible, the

novitiate should be separated from the rest of the house where the professed live, in such a way that, without special reason and permission of the superior or master, neither the novices shall have any communication with the professed nor the professed with the novices. The lay novices are to be assigned a separate place" (01,564).

Note on this canon: a) There is sufficient separation even when the novices have in common with the professed the church, the choir, the refectory, *etc.* b) The isolation between novices and professed should not be understood in such a rigorous and absolute way that the superior cannot allow them to have recreation together on certain days, or to designate some professed to give classes to the novices, etc., especially in small novitiates, as is often the case in convents of nuns, since excessive isolation could be detrimental to the formation of the novices, especially in small novitiates, as is often the case in convents of nuns, because excessive isolation could be detrimental to the formation of the novices themselves. 2.

Novitiate conditions

15, The conditions for making the novitiate, some affect the validity; others, the lawfulness of the novitiate. a)

For validity

i. Legitimate age. The novitiate cannot validly begin without having completed at least fifteen years of age (can. 555.1,1,0). As we have already said, the years must have been completed before beginning the first day of the novitiate. Consequently, one who was born, e.g., on January 1, cannot begin his novitiate before January 2 of the year in which he turns fifteen (cf. en.34 § 3,3.0),

C.2. The Novitiate

The constitutions can indicate for validity or lawfulness an age higher than that fixed by the Code for beginning the novitiate, but not lower. When in a religion two years of novitiate are required, the first year must be considered canonical. Therefore, in these religions, the novitiate cannot be begun at the age of two years.The novitiate can be begun at fourteen years of age by considering as canonical the second, which will begin at fifteen years of age.1* However, this inversion would not affect validity, and the novice could profess at sixteen years of age, unless, the second year being required in the constitutions for validity, the second year were also prescribed for validity, 2. If by mistake the novitiate were begun before the fifteenth birthday, the previous time would not be computed for the novitiate year, but only from the day following the birthday, if the will of the superior and of the novice remains the same. 2. a Complete and continuous year. In order to be valid, the novitiate must last at least one full and continuous year (in 555 § i,2.°). a) Regarding completeness, the constitutions can prolong this time, establishing that the novitiate lasts six months or one more year, but they cannot diminish it not even one day, nor can the superiors shorten the year, although they can prolong it for six months, as we will see later on. “If a longer period is prescribed in the constitutions, what exceeds the year is not required for the validity of profession, unless it is expressly stated otherwise” (cn. 555.2).

Profession cannot be made until the day following the day after the anniversary of the taking of the habit, even if the year was a leap year. b) With regard to continuity, the Code indicates in detail when the novitiate is interrupted or not: “§ i. The novitiate is interrupted, so that it must be begun again and completed, if the novice, dismissed by the superior, has left the house, or has left the house without the permission of the superior and with the intention of not

returning, or, even if he intended to return, if he has been away from the house for more than thirty days, whether consecutive or interpolated, for whatever reason, and even if it was with the consent of the superiors. § 2. If a novice has remained outside the enclosure of the house, but under the obedience of the superior, for more than fifteen days, but not more than thirty, even interpolated, with the permission of superiors or obliged by force, he is 1

1

This was declared by the Commission interpreting the Code on February 12, 1935. Cf. Tabera, o.c. n.222,rb.

It is necessary and sufficient for the validity of the novitiate to make up for the days thus spent. If the stay outside the house did not exceed fifteen days, the superiors can order that he make up for them, but this is not required for the validity of the novitiate. § 3. Superiors are not to grant permission to remain outside the vicinity of the novitiate except for a just and grave cause, § 4. The novitiate is not interrupted because superiors transfer novices to another novitiate house of the same religion" (en,556),

When it is a case of obligatory substitution, all the days spent away from the novitiate must be made up, and it is not enough to make up for those that are more than fifteen days. According to some authors, only the novitiate that is not complete is suspended; thus, if the absence occurs when the complete novitiate year is less than fifteen days away, it would not be obligatory to make up for the days of absence, even if they were more than fifteen. The novitiate is not interrupted, e.g., if because of illness the novice remains outside the novitiate precinct for more than thirty days, but

not outside the novitiate house (e.g., in the common infirmary). On the contrary, it is interrupted if he remains in the farm, country house, etc., which may be kept for the recreation of the novices, unless the license to constitute the novitiate is also extended to it. Military service interrupts the novitiate even if the novice remains under the supervision of the superiors and goes in the free hours to the novitiate, doing with the novices the acts of piety.4 The novitiate is interrupted even if the novice remains under the supervision of the superiors and goes in the free hours to the novitiate, doing with the novices the acts of piety. However, the novice called to military service continues to be united to his institute and enjoys the privileges of the novices. 3. a. In the novitiate house. The third condition for the validity of the novitiate is that it be made in the house legitimately destined for the novitiate (can. 555.1, 3.3°). 4. a

For the respective class.

The Code establishes the following

In religions where there are two classes of religious, the novitiate made for one of them is not valid for the other" (cn. 558).

There are or can be two classes of religious, not only in the clerical religions, but also in the lay religions and religious sisters. One class is made up of religious destined for the priesthood, choir, teaching, etc., and the other of laymen, coadjutors, brothers of obedience, *etc.* J The Sacred Congregation usually grants, without difficulty. Ucence for the novices to be in the country house under the direction of the master. 4 S. C. R-, May 3, 1914: AAS 6 (1914) 229.

The novitiate of one class does not serve for the other. Therefore: a) The novice who passes from one class to another (for which the permission of the Holy See is not required, but only that of the major superior) must begin the novitiate anew, being again admitted according to canon 543, that is, by the major superiors, with the vote of their council or chapter, according to the constitutions. It is not necessary to repeat the postulancy. But if the constitutions require more than one year of novitiate, the transient novice must also do so, without counting the time spent in the novitiate for the other class. b) A professed member who passes to another class must repeat the novitiate as a novice. During it he remains with the vows, which he must renew if they cease during this time, and with the common obligations, plus those peculiar to the new class. At the end of the novitiate, he makes profession for the new class: if he was a religious in perpetual vows, perpetual profession; if in temporary vows, temporary profession. The time spent as a professed religious before the transition is counted for the three-year period preceding perpetual profession. b)

For legality

Besides the conditions required for the validity of the novitiate, several others are required for its legality, e.g., all the ordinances of the Code or of the constitutions themselves relative to the novitiate. We point out here those relative to the beginning of the novitiate and the habit to be worn during the novitiate. 1. a

Beginning of the novitiate.

“The

novitiate

with habit-forming or otherwise, which

the

start

constitutions

determine” (cn.553).

The taking of the habit and the beginning of the novitiate should not be separated, although doing so does not affect their validity. The essential thing is the will of the superior to want the novitiate to begin, a will that has as a sign the taking of the habit or another rite determined by the constitutions. It must be done in such a way that the date is well determined, in order to compute the whole year. 2. a. Habit during the novitiate. “The full year of novitiate should be spent in the habit prescribed for novices by the constitutions, unless the special circumstances of the place require otherwise” (no. 557). The transient religious must wear the habit of the novices of the new religion, and the one who passes to another class, that of the new class.

3*

The novice master and his partner

i6. Those in charge of the formation of the novices during the novitiate period are, principally, the master of novices and his associate (when necessary). Regarding them the Code determines the following: 1.

Appointment.

“For the formation of the novices, a master is to be appointed who is not less than thirty-five years of age, has been professed for at least ten years from the time of his first profession, is outstanding in prudence, charity, piety, religious observance and, in clerical religions, is a priest. If, because of the increased number of novices or for other just cause, it is deemed convenient, a partner will be given to the master of novices, immediately subject to him in what concerns the novitiate regime, at least thirty years of age and at least five years professed from the time of his first profession, and endowed with other necessary and opportune qualities. Both of them must be free from all offices and burdens that could impede the care and regimen of the novitiate” (en.559).

The master should be only one, as required by the unity of formation to be given to the novices. The Sacred Congregation does not usually permit two masters, one for choir religious and another for coadjutor brothers in the same house. If the number of novices requires it, several associates could be designated in common or for the different classes of persons. 2.

Election.

“The master of novices and the socius shall be elected according to the norm of the constitutions, and if the constitutions indicate the time of their term of office, during this time they shall not be removed without just and grave cause; but they can be reelected” (en.560).

Reelection may be repeated indefinitely, without any limitation.

3.

Rights and duties.

“The master alone has the right and the duty to see to the formation of the novices, and to him alone belongs the government of the novitiate, so that in this no one may interfere in any way, except the superiors whom the constitutions permit and the visitators; but as for the discipline of the whole house, the master, like the novices, is subject to the superior. The novices are subject to the authority of the master and of the superiors of the religion and are obliged to obey them” (en.561).

The local superior himself and, a fortiori, other lower officials, cannot intervene in the novitiate regime, unless expressly permitted by the Constitutions.

C.2. The Novitiate

The novices are obliged to obey the master by virtue of the quasi-contract established by admission to the novitiate. During the novitiate, transient religious are subject to the master by virtue of the vow of obedience (can. 633.1). In no case does the master-by his office alone-have power of jurisdiction over the novices. “The master of novices has a grave obligation to see to it that his students diligently exercise themselves in religious discipline, according to the constitutions, in accord with canon 565” (can. 562).

Canon 565 says: “The novitiate year should be directed to the good formation of the spirit of the students under the discipline of the master, studying the rule and constitutions, making pious meditations and assiduous prayer, learning well what concerns the vows and the virtues, and exercising themselves in a timely manner to root out the origin of vices, to restrain internal movements and to acquire the virtues. § 2. The laity, moreover, are to be instructed in Christian doctrine by giving them a special lecture at least once a week. § 3. During the novitiate year, the novices are not to

be assigned to preaching or to the confessional or to other external offices of religion, nor are they to devote themselves purposely to the study of literature, science, or the arts. And the laymen, while they can exercise the offices of the professed laymen in the religious house (never, however, as first clerks) as long as the exercises of the novitiate proper to them do not hinder them".

With regard to the third paragraph, in the Constitution Sedes Sapientiae of Pius XII, it is said that it is not forbidden to review, to give short practical exercises, even daily, or to hold domestic classes that are not to be counted for the school year (a.36). Another obligation of the master of novices is to give an account of the conduct of the novices to the chapter or major superior: "Within the novitiate year, the master, according to the norm of the constitutions, shall present to the chapter or major superior an account of the manner of conduct of each of his students" (n. 563).

4.

Confessors of novices

17* The Canonical Code distinguishes between novitiates for women and those for men: a)

In the women's novitiates

"With regard to the confessor, in novitiates for women, the prescriptions of canons 520-527 are to be observed" (canon 566 § 1). Canons 520-527 establish the following: Canon 520.

"§ 1.

Each house of nuns should be given a single

ordinary confessor to hear the sacramental confessions of the whole community.

The “nity” unless “because of the increased number of nuns” or for another “just cause” it is necessary to appoint another or more. § 2. If a religious” for peace of mind and for greater advantage in the ways of God” asks for a special confessor or spiritual director,” the ordinary 1 must be easy in granting it,” taking care, however,” lest abuses2 be introduced by reason of such a concession; and” if they should be introduced, he must eliminate them with caution and prudence,” leaving freedom of conscience safe.

It cannot be denied that sometimes a special confessor or spiritual director will be necessary or convenient for a certain religious, in virtue of certain and special circumstances; but, in general, it will be better that they accept with simplicity and humility the common confessor, well persuaded that Divine Providence will not fail to grant them through him the necessary lights and orientations to reach Christian perfection if, on the other hand, they are very faithful to the internal motions of the Holy Spirit, who must always be the principal spiritual director of the souls that seriously aspire to be sanctified. Without this exquisite fidelity to grace they will never be sanctified no matter how many excellent confessors or directors they have; and with it they will reach the summit even if they do not have a very competent human director and even if they lack one at all. Canon 521, “§ x. To each community of religious there is to be assigned an extraordinary confessor” who at least four times a year must go to the religious house” and all the

religious are to go to the confessional at least to receive the blessing.

§ The ordinaries of places where there are communities of religious shall appoint some priests for each house, to whom they can easily have recourse to hear confessions with them in particular cases" without it being necessary to go to the local ordinary each time. § 3. If any religious requests one of these confessors," it is not licit for any superior, either personally or through others, directly or indirectly," to inquire into the reason for such a request, nor to oppose it by word or deed, nor by any title to manifest that it is displeasing to her.

It is customary that the extraordinary confessor goes to fulfill his office in the four seasons. The nuns are free to confess or not with him; but all must go to the confessional at least to receive the blessing, in order to avoid unjustified suspicions and not to restrict the freedom of the others who want to confess with him. The confessors referred to in the second paragraph are called adjunct confessors or confessors for particular cases. They are 1 This refers to the bishop or ordinary of the place, not to the ordinary confessor mentioned in the preceding paragraph. 2 To be/to be an abuse the disturbance of discipline, extraordinary expenses, bad example, etc.; not some discomfort for the superior or for the doorkeeper, *etc.*

C.2. The Novitiate

appointed by the local ordinary, so that the nuns can easily have recourse to them without the need for special permission from the ordinary in each case. These adjunct confessors are not to be confused with the special confessors mentioned in the preceding canon. Canon 522. "If, notwithstanding the provisions of canons 520 and 521, any

religious, for the tranquility of her conscience, has recourse to a confessor approved by the local ordinary to hear confessions of women, the confession made in any church or oratory, even a semi-public one, is valid and licit, any privilege to the contrary being revoked. And the superior cannot prohibit it, nor make inquiries about it, not even indirectly; nor do the religious have to give an account of it to the superior.

Note the following about this important canon;

2.0 He is an occasional confessor (not habitual) and for individual religious, not for the whole community. Therefore, the superior cannot call him for the whole community when the ordinary, the extraordinary or the adjuncts are absent: the confessions would be invalid or null and void. 3.0 The particular religious can go to the confessor or the confessor can also be called to the place of confession. 4.0 Confession can be made not only in the places indicated in the canon, but also in the place designated for a particular case, or chosen according to canon 910.1, that is, in case of sickness or true necessity. Therefore, whenever the confession of a woman is valid and licit, the confession of a religious is valid and licit by reason of the place 3. 5° She can use this faculty except for the law of enclosure and other prescriptions of the constitutions. Therefore, a nun may not leave the house without permission for this purpose: she must wait until she can do so without violating any law of departure. But when the occasion to go out presents itself to her, she can take advantage of the exit to go to confession, without having to ask permission from the superior or to give her an account afterwards. The confessor may not enter the cloister of the nuns for this occasional confession. Canon 523, "All the nuns, when they are seriously ill, even if they are not in danger of death, can send for any sacer3 Causes for going to confession outside the confessional could be: deafness, not

being able to go to the confessional because the key has been lost; because they are prevented in any way; because it is known that the superior takes it to me; because the attention of the community is called or it gives rise to small talk, *etc.*

The superior cannot prohibit them either directly or indirectly from going to confession with him as many times as they wish while the serious illness lasts, without the superior being able to forbid them to do so.

In virtue of the canons we have just recalled, six classes of confessors of religious can be distinguished: ordinary, special (for each one), extraordinary, adjunct, occasional and that of the gravely ill. In Spain, by virtue of the privilege granted in the Bull of the Holy Crusade, nuns, taking the summary, once in life and once in danger of death (or twice in both cases, taking two summaries) within the year of the concession, can confess to any confessor approved to confess women, who can absolve them from reserved sins and censures-other than those reserved ab homine or most especially to the pope-without their having to have recourse afterwards to any confessor. For the office of ordinary and extraordinary confessor of nuns, priests, either of the secular clergy or religious, with the permission of their superiors, must be appointed who are outstanding for prudence and integrity of morals, who, moreover, have attained the age of forty years, unless a just cause, in the judgment of the ordinary, requires otherwise, and who have no power in the external forum over the same religions. § 2. An ordinary confessor cannot be named extraordinary nor, except in the cases enumerated in canon 526, be named ordinary again in the same community except after one year from the end of his office; but an extraordinary confessor can immediately

be named ordinary confessor. § 3. The confessors of religious, both ordinary and extraordinary, are in no way to interfere in the internal or external government of the community”.

To the internal regime of the community belongs the schedule of the same, the distribution of charges to the religious, etc., and to the external one the placement of the money, the rendering of accounts, etc., are referred to. The first corresponds to the superior; the second, to the local ordinary. The confessor should not interfere at all in either of the two. Canon 525. “If the house of the religious is subject immediately to the Holy See or to the local ordinary, it is the latter who chooses both ordinary and extraordinary confessors. If it is subject to the regular superior, the latter presents the confessors to the ordinary, to whom it pertains to approve them so that the nuns may confess and, if necessary, to make up for the superior’s neglect”. Canon 526. “The ordinary confessor of the nuns shall not exercise his office for more than three years. The ordinary may, however, confirm him for a second and even a third three-year term if, because of a shortage of suitable priests

C.2. The Novitiate

for the said office, she cannot make use of another; or also when the majority of the religious, including those who do not have the right to vote in other matters, agree, by secret ballot, to ask for the confirmation of the same confessor; but for those who dissent, it will be provided in another way, if they wish it”.

The confirmation of the same confessor for more than three (three-year terms) can only be done with the permission of the Holy See. In Spain, the bishops usually have special faculties for this, after the suffrage of the majority of the

community, as indicated in canon 527. Canon 527. “The ordinary of the place can, according to canon 880, for grave cause, remove from office the confessor of the nuns, both ordinary and extraordinary, even when the monastery is subject to the regulars and the confessor is also regular, without having to manifest to anyone the cause of removal, except to the Apostolic See, in case it is required; but if the nuns are subject to the regulars, he must notify the regular superior of the removal”. b)

In the men’s novitiates

Canon 566. Canon 519:

§ 2.

“In male religions, except as provided for in the

2. The ordinary confessors, in the case of the clerical religion, must reside in the novitiate house itself; in the case of the lay religion, they must at least come frequently to the novitiate house to hear the confessions of the novices. 3.0 Apart from the ordinary confessors, some others shall be appointed, to whom the novices may freely go in particular cases; and the master shall be careful not to show that he dislikes them. 4.0 At least four times a year, an extraordinary confessor shall be given to the novices, to whom all must go, even to receive his blessing”.

Canons 519 and 891 referred to in the preceding canon read as follows: Canon 519. “Without prejudice to the constitutions which prescribe or advise confession at specified times with appointed confessors, if a religious, even if exempt, goes for the tranquility of his conscience to a confessor approved by the local ordinary, even if he is not included among those appointed, the confession, any contrary privilege being revoked, is valid and licit; and the

said confessor may absolve the religious even from sins - and censures reserved in religion.” Canon 891. “Neither the master of novices and his associate, nor the superior of the seminary or of a college should hear the sacramental confessions of the students living with them in the same house, unless the students, for a grave and urgent cause, spontaneously ask him to do so in particular cases.”

P.¡. Canonical aspect of religious life

Other canons concerning the confessors of religious establish the following: Canon 518 “§ 1. In all houses of clerical religion, proportionately to the number of religious of which they consist, several legitimately approved confessors are to be appointed, with power, if it is a matter of exempt religion, to absolve also from cases reserved in religion.

§ Religious superiors who have the power to hear confessions, fulfilling the requirements of law, can hear the confessions of subjects who spontaneously and of their own accord ask them to do so; but without cause they are not to do so in a habitual manner. § 3. Superiors are to beware, either by themselves or by another, of inducing any subject by violence, fear, importunate exhortations, or in any other way to confess to them”. Canon 528. “According to canons 874.1 and 875.2, even in lay religions of men, ordinary and extraordinary confessors are to be named; and if a religious asks for a special confessor, the superior is to grant it to him, without making the slightest inquiry into the reason for the request or showing that he does not like it.

5.

Privileges of the novices

18* From the moment the novitiate begins, the novices are equated with the professed as regards participation in the

same favors and privileges: “The novices enjoy all the privileges and spiritual graces granted to religion; and if they die before professing, they have the right to the same suffrages prescribed for the professed” (cn. 507 §1).

They also enjoy the privileges of clerics (cn. 119123), as do the professed (en.614). Therefore, he incurs excommunication reserved to the proper ordinary who commits real injury (lays violent hands) on the person of a novice (en.2343 § 4). It is to be noted, moreover, the following: i.° During the novitiate novices are not to be promoted to holy orders (en.567, § 2). 2.0 They can, in case of danger of death, advance their profession, as we shall explain in its proper place. 3.0 In religions of solemn vows, novices enjoy the privilege of exemption in the same way as the professed (can. 615), and on the day of their entrance they gain plenary indulgence 4. 4.0 Novices are not strictly bound to observe the rules or constitutions of their religion, since they have not yet promised to do so by profession; but they must do so, inasmuch as 4.

Paulo

V, const. Romanus Pontí/ex, 23 May 1Ó06.

possible, to exercise themselves in their observance, to give good example, to avoid breaches in the discipline of the monastery, *etc.* 5.0 In monasteries of nuns, novices (and even postulants) are subject to the law of enclosure (can. 540.3). But if they break it, they do not incur excommunication, which applies only to professed nuns (can. 2342, 3.0). 6º Novices, like professed nuns, cannot be sponsors at baptism and confirmation, except for an urgent

reason and with the express permission of the superior, at least locally (cn. 766,4,0; 796,3.0).

6. 19.

The goods of the novices

The Canonical Code establishes the following:

“If in the course of the novitiate the novice renounces, in any way, his benefits or goods, or obligates them, this renunciation or obligation is not only illicit, but also invalid, by virtue of the law itself” (cn. 568).

The purpose of this canon is to protect the freedom of the novices, so that they can easily leave the religious state if they do not have the strength to make profession, because it is certain that this freedom would be diminished if the novice had legally disposed of his goods and would be left without means of subsistence in the event of returning to the century. For this reason, necessary expenses and small donations, even those made to religion, which do not notably diminish the patrimony, are not considered prohibited. With regard to the administration, use and usufruct of his goods, the Code expressly indicates what is to be done in canon 569. It says: “Before the profession of simple vows, whether temporary or perpetual, the novice must, for as long as he is bound by such vows, cede to whomever he pleases the administration of his goods and, unless the constitutions determine otherwise, freely dispose of the use and usufruct of the same. § 2. If a novice has omitted to make such a cession and disposition because he lacks goods and acquires them after professing, or if he has done so, but then acquires more goods, by whatever title, he is to make or repeat it according to the norms established in § 1, notwithstanding the simple profession he has made. § 3.

The novice of a religious congregation, before the profession of temporary vows, is to make a testament, freely disposing of his present goods or of those that may come to him later.

The obligation to make a will imposed by the third paragraph refers only to novices of a congregation.

religious. Superiors must see to it that the novices and novices, when the time comes for them to profess, fulfill this obligation with complete freedom, avoiding anything that directly or indirectly could restrict it, such as importunate entreaties, exhortations, recommendations, etc., to induce them to dispose of the will in one way or another, especially in the case of novices who, because of their natural shyness, are more exposed to the danger of not proceeding with all the freedom that is required of them, especially in the case of novices, who, because of their natural shyness, are more exposed to the danger of not proceeding with all the freedom that the law grants them and that must be scrupulously respected, on pain of committing a great abuse and a manifest injustice. With regard to the economic relations between the novice and the religion, canon 570 determines the following: “§ 1. Nothing can be demanded for the expenses of the postulancy or novitiate, unless the constitutions or an express agreement made at the beginning of the postulancy or novitiate authorize the collection of the amount of food and of the religious habit. § 2. The objects which the aspirant has brought with him and which have not been consumed in use are to be returned to him if he abandons religion before professing.

Abandonment or termination of the novitiate

Canon 571 establishes the following:

“The novice can freely leave the religion or be dismissed by the superiors or by the chapter, according to the constitutions, for any just cause, without the superior or the chapter being obliged to inform the dismissed person of the cause of the dismissal. § 2. At the conclusion of the novitiate, the novice is to be admitted to profession if he is judged suitable; otherwise, he is to be dismissed. In case of doubt concerning his suitability, major superiors can extend his probationary period, but not for more than six months. § 3. Before profession the novice must make spiritual exercises for at least eight full days”.

Article 3

FORMATION OF THE NOVICES 21* We hasten to say that this article is not addressed to the novices, but to their formators. The correct and complete formation of the novices is of great interest. It is decisive for their entire future religious life. With very rare exceptions,

the religious will suffer all his life from a deficient or incomplete formation in his novitiate. The Canonical Code-as we have already seen-determines precisely in canon 565 what the formation of the novices should consist of during their year of probation: “The novitiate year should be directed to the good formation of the spirit of the students under the discipline of the master: - By studying the rule and the constitutions. - By pious meditation and assiduous prayer. - By learning well what concerns the vows and the

virtues. - Exercising himself in a timely manner to root out the origin of vices. - To restrain the internal movements. - Acquire the virtues”.

For the realization of such a vast and difficult program, it is already understood that a master or mistress of exceptional qualities is required. The Canon Code itself establishes the following in its canon 559: “For the formation of novices, a master is to be appointed who is not less than thirty-five years of age, who has been professed for at least ten years, beginning with first profession; who is outstanding for his prudence, charity, piety, religious observance and, in clerical religions, is a priest”.

The office of novice master is, without a doubt, one of the most responsible in a religious order. He must devote himself body and soul to his very delicate mission. Let us listen again to canon 562 of the Canon Code: “The master of novices has a grave obligation to make every effort to see that his students diligently exercise themselves in religious discipline, according to the constitutions, in accordance with canon 565.

In order to help the masters and mistresses of novices in their difficult and transcendental mission, the following is the best study we know of those published in Spanish on the formation of novices. In these eminently practical matters the professional theologian has very little to say. It is preferable that experienced men speak. In the remainder of this article we leave the floor to a great specialist who has held the position of novice master for many years in his own religious congregation h 1 Cf. Fr. Beniamín Huerga, C. M., Conocimiento del novicio, in Actas del Congreso nacional de perfección y apostolado vol.4 (Madrid 1959) p.225-247. We thank Fr. Huerga for the kindness with which he has allowed us to reproduce his beautiful work in its entirety.

P.I. Canonical aspect of religious life

i.

Knowledge of novices

22. i. Nature. This is the sagacity or perspicacity in knowing the young, in knowing what they are, what they can give of themselves under various circumstances, and the evolution that age and education will bring about in them in their various aspects. Applied to the knowledge of souls in order to their perfection, this sagacity constitutes the practical discretion of spirits, which is of two kinds: ordinary and extraordinary.

Ordinary: It is an accurate intuition, by means of which, without the need for much reasoning, with natural light and ordinary grace, one sees the natural and supernatural value of souls with sufficient clarity. The cultivation of one's own soul and experiences sharpen more and more this intuitive power. Extraordinary: It is the grace "gratis data", belonging to the gift of counsel, which gives to those who possess it a very fine sense of smell to distinguish what is perfect from what is not, even if it seems so to the profane. It is the divine wisdom of the saints that makes them consummate spiritual directors. It would please God that we all had this gift, but the vast majority of us will have to be content with ordinary lights cultivated with skill. This is what we will now discuss.
2. Importance of this knowledge. This knowledge and sagacity, desirable in every director, are exceptionally so in the master of novices, because he has in his hands the fate of some select souls and the future of an order. If by a bad advice he is the cause of a soul choosing his vocation badly or abandoning the true one in which he lives, he will also be the cause of his unhappiness in this life and of his reaching the next one - if he arrives - by rocky roads. Assuming the

right choice of the candidate, it is necessary to know him well in order to be able to direct him properly. Each soul, besides the common one, needs a particular treatment, because each one has its own path and that, and no other, must be helped to travel. Thus, only through the knowledge of the candidate can the double purpose of the novitiate be fulfilled: to choose and to perfect the chosen ones.

If it is important with respect to the candidates, it is no less important for the order itself. To admit new members without satisfactory proof of their dignity could soon seriously damage it. The unworthy ones always turn out to be dislocated bones that bother and harm the whole body, which ends up eliminating them if they are not eliminated spontaneously. And if this “desideratum” is not reached, they remain in the body for life to weigh it down with ballast, friction and dead weight. I have heard this sentence attributed to St. Thomas: “In order that the Church may have the priests she needs, ordain only worthy ones”.

Something similar could be said of the religious orders; so that they can carry out all the enterprises that the Lord asks of them, to give way only to those who are called and worthy. Who are the called and worthy? Here is the problem, which cannot be solved without adequate knowledge.”

3. Difficulty of this knowledge” The human heart is an unfathomable abyss. There are cases in which, no matter how much one opens one’s eyes, one does not see anything clearly” Neither the sincerity of the heart itself, nor all the external indicative arrows are sufficient to dissipate the fog and with it the imprecision. What will happen when the

heart begins to be hypocritical and changes directions to disorientate? The novices are divided in this respect into light and dark. The second group is without comparison smaller, but it is the one that gives more headaches and is the cause of real perplexities; “This one who is so good and seems a little short, does he pass or not? That one who is so clever and accomplished, but of such a superb natural background, does he pass or does he stay? The one beyond who, without knowing why, does not quite fill, shall we eliminate him or let him live ?” The danger of cutting off the path to a worthy aspirant unsettles. Letting an unworthy one pass through horrifies, ending up being a curse for the Church and for the order.

It is, therefore, evident the importance of perfecting oneself in this sagacity to discern the true from the false, the gold from the tinsel. Grace of state will do much; but grace perfects nature and there is no doubt: in equal circumstances, the most sagacious will be the best teacher to penetrate the human heart and to know how to govern it. 4” Extension of this knowledge” It must be as complete as possible in all aspects: physical, intellectual, moral, psychological, familial. Some influence others and sometimes determine each other in a definitive way, creating complexes that are difficult to decipher, channel or uproot without the complete picture” It should be extended to the present, the past and the future.

a) With regard to the present, the director must form a judgment, first of all, about the virtue of each of his novices, their attitude towards mortal sin, venial sin and fully deliberate imperfection, their strength for sacrifice out of love, the sincerity of their vocation, *etc.* b) Without seeming snoopy, it is also good to know the past, even in general and precise lines, because the past and the present “determine” to a great extent the future. Without solera, quality wines

cannot be produced. With corrupt childhood or youth, especially within the apostolic colleges that have more supernatural means to preserve themselves, it will be difficult to obtain good priests and religious. Even if the wounds seem healed, they will easily reopen. With this prior knowledge, in case of doubt, it can be resolved more easily and decisively.

P.L Canonical aspect of religious life

Elementary school, high school, university, professional life; each formative stage prepares for the next and is difficult to replace. In the religious career this has its parallelism; apostolic school, novitiate, priestly life? A corrupt apostolic, a lukewarm or rootless novice, perhaps a sinful student; and if he arrives, a scandalous priest, who spends his life going up and down the first step of being good: not to sin mortally. c) For what is to come, it is good to look into the present ideals and examine the supernatural part that is in them.

5. Who should obtain this knowledge. In the first place, the Father Master; it is up to him more than anyone else to acquire a clear and as detailed knowledge of his novices as possible, but not to him alone. It is very important that all those who in some way influence their formation and decide on their vocation: sub-directors or confessors, teachers, superiors, etc., know them. And it is good that they all attend the disciplinary councils and communicate their impressions to each other as much as possible, or at least hear the impressions of others. Four eyes see more than two. Thus they will all work on realities and not on entelechies.

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2* 1.

Sources of knowledge

A good record of the apostolic school.

To be good it has to be practical. Too much technicality can stifle the freshness of direct impressions. It must gather the result of five or six years of contacts with formators of one's own congregation, which it would be foolish to waste. It must contain the family, physical, intellectual, moral and psychological aspects. Young people at that age are susceptible to many changes, and he who has been a rascal in the apostolic school can become a St. Louis in the novitiate. But there is a danger of becoming a St. Aloysius in the novitiate, because nature is very shrewd at entrenching itself when the environment is excessively adverse. These occasional entrenchments make it difficult for the newcomer to know exactly what he is doing. The difficulty will not be so great if the new trainer is given the key in the file, highlighting a virtue or a permanent defect.

Apostolic formators should not let themselves be carried away by vanity or the prurience of presenting model or serial boys. They should strive to give the characteristics of each one, highlighting the good and the bad and the dangers that, in their judgment, may arise. The director, for his part, should also not be carried away by

favorable or unfavorable first impressions. When they are sent to you, it is a sign that others have judged your aptitude favorably. The most prudent thing to do is to wait: time makes individuals known without the need to become a prophet. 2.

Spiritual communication.

Assuming complete sincerity, it is, perhaps, the main source of information, since no one knows what goes on in the heart

of man better than the heart itself. But trust, the mother of sincerity, is not commanded: it is prepared, it is deserved, it is inspired, removing obstacles and encouraging everything that favors it. The director must be seriously concerned about all this. Obstacles he must remove: a) A reputation for rigidity, if he has one. The novices must be convinced that the director is hurt by nonobservance, and even more by sins, and that he has a true zeal for regularity; but not that he is rigorous, uncompromising and uncomprehending, but the opposite: that he has a very great soul that knows how to cry with those who cry and laugh with those who laugh. b) Little affability in appearance. Although he is not rigid at heart, excessive seriousness can be detrimental to him. Never receive with grim, hard or inquisitorial countenance, because that attitude overwhelms the timid souls and to the strong ones it reconcentrates them in themselves in an attitude of self-defense. When, out of fear, we have succeeded in snatching a secret from us, we regret it later as if it had been stolen from us. c) Lack of meekness and dominion in general treatment. If in the exhortations, reprimands and general punishments he should allow himself to be carried away by domineering attitudes, intemperance of form or aggressive phrases, if he really has a strong and hard personality, they will be afraid of him; on the contrary, if they are the disguise of a radical weakness, they will end up by despising him. Neither fear nor contempt engenders confidence. d) Very repeated punishments. The director of novices must punish little, and this little, even if it is well deserved, let him do so with the pain of having to resort to these resources. |It is a bad sign that punishments must be repeated so that there will be order! e) Sharp ironies and belittling. To know how to take out the colors and to let run the self-love, without abdicating the kindness of heart and the paternal affection, is a great quality; but the sharp and cold ironies, the scorns and deviations will humiliate without fruit and in the same degree they will

close and they will move away their hearts. They tend to leave a residue of resentment and antipathies that are difficult to heal. f) Curious and hurgon attitude. The mere curiosity cannot be blessed by God. It is necessary to have respect for the souls, not forcing them to the manifestation of what is not necessary nor useful: Quod tibí non vis alteri ne feceris. Nor to try to force the doors when they do not open spontaneously, but to seek with skill the springs proper to each one that, just by touching them, leave them wide open. The magic key that enters all the locks is true and supernatural love. Certain matters of conscience should not be rummaged through too often either.

under the pretext of seeing how things are going. For the plants, once buried, to take root, do not dig too much or too many times to look at the roots. Nor do wounds heal better by much poking at them. Moderate communication inspires reverence; if they frequent each other excessively, they lose their modesty, a certain spiritual modesty, and it is the same for them to present themselves in one way as in another. Let the door of the soul be opened without violence, not to curiosity nor to caprice, but to the doctor.... The sick, although they need the doctor, have their rights which cannot be trampled upon, g) Police attitude in the methods of vigilance. Try to find out everything, but avoid in your manners anything that may appear to be police-like. Never say phrases such as: “I finally caught you; I was looking forward to it”. Neither presume to be shrewd to find out little rascalities, but on the contrary. Even if the findings are the result of diligent inquiries, dissimulate and give the impression that you have found everything without looking for it, because police cunning encourages that of thieves, and the boy who feels persecuted closes and hides.

Cultivate, on the contrary, whatever fosters filial trust and abandonment: a) True love. A great and supernatural love, broad and welcoming, which will insensibly be felt in all his actions. And since our novices are usually at the age of love, it is convenient that the director has much of father and enough of mother; his love should not be sentimental, but full of cordiality, so that it invites to trust, instills faith in the person, urges to say everything and to expect prudent and disinterested solutions for everything. If he loves them from the heart, they will love him, and "ipso facto" all the ice that hinders sincere communication will be melted. The Father Master must be persuaded that the esteem, respect and love that the novices must have for him in order for his communications to be effective, are not the fruit of theatrical attitudes, but of the intrinsic natural and supernatural value of the person. Young people soon distinguish the authentic from the surrogate. Even if they do not know how to concretize it in a formula, they feel it, and the repercussion in their behavior is almost mechanical. b) Cultivation of goodness. But not a sweet and insipid kindness, but an energetic kindness. A certain condescending softness suits the director well, but backed by an energy that knows how to be used effectively and thoroughly when necessary. Let the novices feel that when the director gives a serious command, it must be carried out, and that if he sometimes lets them do it, it is not out of neglect or weakness, but out of paternal condescension. They should not be afraid of him, but they should respect him. Both things together attract. c) Provide facilities for communication. If someone feels the need for excessive communication, the logical thing to do is not to throw him out with a bang, but to make him not need it. Attending them not only when they are called by order, but whenever they ask for it, unless it is a bore or a clingy person who wants to win the will of the superior interestedly. There is everything. d) Trust them. At least apparently. It is necessary

to give the impression that you have faith in their sincerity. As long as you do not have convincing proofs of the duplicity of a novice, do not doubt-externally-their

C.2. The novtctado

words, even if their veracity is very doubtful. It is better to have a reputation for credulity than to be taken to task. Once his duplicity is proven, if he is not eliminated, exhort him to regenerate himself, reproaching him for his conduct; but do not tell him that he has lost all his credibility, because it would be tantamount to throwing him out and he would be closed for good. e)

NOT TO MENTION AT ALL THE APOSTOLIC SCHOOL CARDS.

LeS

It gives a sense of security, joy and well-being to feel that you are judged by the present, as if all the blots on your previous record had been removed, unless by your own confession.

With the previous knowledge it is very easy to make them confess “spontaneously” what is convenient. f) To instill optimism in the spiritual bumps. Let them know that as long as they have the capacity to react sincerely against evil, they do not lose credit, esteem and love. There are kids who think otherwise. They are ashamed to appear in front of the director because he has caught them in some slip and knows their weaknesses, and they are moving away… g) To make the act of communication friendly. The act of communication must be impregnated with frank cordiality, without false mysticism; but anointed with deep and sincere piety that excites to love God and to sacrifice oneself joyfully for Him. Affectionate communication, according to the characters, but not sugary. Young people with health and psychological

normality like sweet and sour or very discreet sweets better than sweet things. If ever it is necessary to scold or punish, do not wait for it to communication or shortly before it. In this act, kindness, mercy, understanding and cordiality should shine forth; perhaps serious parental reflection, but not bitter reproof or punishment. May they always leave wishing to return! I demand written communications. They are better prepared, more precise, and it is finished sooner, not by allowing comings and goings, but what really makes the individual known. On the basis of the writing come the questions and answers. It is anti-pedagogical to threaten expulsion if a fault or hidden or internal sin is repeated. Rather, tell him that it is a fault incompatible with the priesthood, that God would take away his vocation to give it to others, etc., and when the occasion arises, act without threats. Because, if threats are made and they are not interested in leaving, they will withdraw into themselves and become hypocrites. This is also true for confessors. To remove harmful blushes, speak of the things that produce them, when necessary, with naturalness, frankness, sobriety and decorum, as of the most ordinary thing. Do not show astonishment or bad humor for more disorders that they communicate to us, but rather noble and compassionate pity, because if they feel diminished and lowered in the eyes of the director, they are ashamed, saddened, they move away and lose confidence. For the same reason, it is necessary to give the impression, as long as things are going normally, that the miseries heard in the communication are forgotten. If they are ever recalled, let them be remembered in order to make an effort, to uplift; never to humiliate in the sense of demeaning contemptuously. To say very clearly at the beginning of the novitiate that to remain silent about something in the communication is not a sin, but that he who does not do it as he believes in conscience that he should do it, despises a grace, throws dirt in his eyes and will not prosper. He will even endanger his vocation. All this

is true. It is necessary to encourage them to be frank as very proper of noble souls.

and virile, presenting at the same time the nooks and crannies of conscience as something effeminate and more typical of young girls... With a little tact and skill, without shouting propaganda, the result is magnificent.

3.

Confession.

In the customs of confession, much contraband will be discovered that will have managed to pass hidden through all the others: mortal sins, perhaps; many venial sins, and, even more, positive imperfections of those that most portray the person. This is a knowledge of great value, not only because of the forgiveness obtained through absolution, but also because it will bring out facets of the soul that only in confession are revealed and only the confessor can take advantage of in order to give direction. In order to properly appreciate these manifestations, the confessor must obtain the most complete knowledge possible of the novice, because his ministry in the novitiate cannot be reduced to forgiving sins submitted to his tribunal, but also and very principally to fostering virtues, to rectifying imperfect habits and psychological defects, favoring the direction given by the director or supplementing and complementing it when the penitent refuses to declare himself properly in the direction. The ascetic discourse prepared beforehand is usually not very effective. But dialogue is effective when one knows the penitent well inside and out and has succeeded in gaining his confidence. 4.

Direct external knowledge.

Spiritual direction and the confessional alone provide an unrealistic vision of the psyche or, better, an incomplete one. Sometimes, the less often, because of true hypocrisy, and other times, the more often, because they do not know themselves nor gauge the transcendence of their defects, especially in the very important aspect of psychology, and other defective habits without actual malice. For this reason, the confessors of novices who do not treat them outside the confessional usually judge them better than their inspectors: the former know their good intentions and the latter their imperfect realities. From synthesis is born perfect knowledge. Therefore, confessors should try to know them by other ways besides confession, not to accuse them of what they do not accuse themselves of, nor to judge of the malice of their sins with external criteria, but so that the questions and advice are ad rem. And the same and with more reason the director. Hear

what the other formators observe and say and, above all, treat them directly outside of ritual acts and at the junctures in which the impetus of nature breaks all masks without being able to avoid the spontaneous: games, disputes, family dealings, illnesses, work, correspondence, written exercises, graphology, public performances, positions, subjection to equals and inferiors with positions, *etc.* Without disregarding other sources of information, none like the direct one: a gesture can say what is not said in many communications. To see them, then, to treat them, to live with them without giving the sensation of a policeman, but rather of a friend and a father, who knows not to hear or see when it is convenient, and knows how to correct them without acrimony when it is necessary, so that they do not become alert or angry when they see him in front of them. In this way, without haste, giving each day a brushstroke,

valuing one with the others that mutually vanish or confirm and always ready to correct the picture with new findings, at the end of a year, and better two, one arrives at a quite satisfactory knowledge or one is convinced of being in the presence of an enigma that, dangerous as it is, one cannot let it pass. Since the director does not confess, he can, in all liberty, recommend the fixed confessor, so that the latter may know them well, and despise the conduct and lack of simplicity of those who go from confessor to confessor with the little right intention of hiding themselves. But making it very clear that each one has omnimitable freedom to confess to whomever he wants and that they can permanently change confessors if they do better with another one. Distinguish well between obligation and what is most profitable.

External dealings with penitents and directees, There are those who flee from external dealings with the director, not to hide hypocritically, but out of a kind of embarrassment: they feel as if they are naked in public. Others, the other way around. The same is true of confessors. To deal and even to play habitually with penitents and those under their direction, and for this to serve for good, supposes a great deal of prudence so as not to put everything in the window. It is difficult to appear spontaneous and jovial while always maintaining a certain balance and unbribable reserve. It is not for everyone. It requires a special character. 5.

Lo

WHAT HIS PEERS SAY ABOUT HIM.

When all or most of the opinions agree that a novice is, e.g., strange, foolish, stingy, stingy, imprudent, extravagant, unfriendly, stubborn, sensual, etc., or his contra

But it can be taken as a fairly safe criterion; but by sifting the reports, because the children do not appreciate well the importance of certain internal qualities and exaggerate the importance of what is merely external. I sometimes ask everyone for everyone, preparing the ground beforehand, mainly by taking away from the survey any police character. I announce it to them beforehand, making them see that one of the greatest misfortunes that can befall them is that their superiors, for lack of knowledge, allow them to go down a path that is not theirs, because, later, they will have to retrace it, God knows with how many stumbles and falls. Or also that they remain all their lives in the same defects because they have no one to warn them and correct them for ignoring them. I try to make them esteem the fraternal warning and the paternal correction, persuading them that a warning, a correction or a penance in time can avoid serious and irremediable evils. For that, the director and the vice-directors must know things early, and they will not know them if they do not do them the charity of telling them, for it would not be right for them to watch them everywhere as if they had no conscience or were thoughtless children, incapable of behaving well on their own…. That, as they grow up, they are left alone to learn how to be people… That the normal thing is for everyone to take care of good order and perfect regularity, promptly and charitably warning whoever they should or, at least, the headmaster so that he can quickly remedy the situation without giving rise to complications… That everything has to be the work of all, *etc.* I tell them many times that the superiors are their best friends, even if sometimes they have to punish them for their own good, and that they are not surprised that there are faults, because they are the fruit of human nature. That

what is truly strange to them and what they will never understand is the attempt to unite the desire for their own perfection with not wanting to correct their faults nor to want others to correct them. At the same time that the fraternal warning is exalted, the baseness of snitching due to envy, revenge, etc., or other passions should be denigrated, taking care not to encourage it with one's own attitude. Whoever betrays the faults of another should never be given signs of appreciation for this reason. Let his reward be the joy of having fulfilled a duty; especially if the denunciations are frequent and of doubtful purity of intention. To cure the spirit of snitching-which soon gives it away-receive the warnings impassively and never act publicly.

C.2. The novitiate

by virtue of them. The whistleblower soon tires if he is not flattered and does not see the effects. 6.

For his works.

“By their fruits you shall know them” (Mt 7:16). 3. 24.

Some criteria for judging novices

a

Looking to the future.

What kind of religious or priest will be tomorrow, taking into account the ordinary spiritual and scientific evolution? But… beware of excessively harsh judgments! One easily forgets what he was, both in science and in virtue, and insensibly is inclined to measure the novice with his own current canon, without taking into account the years that have passed and the consequent evolution. If they are young and normal,

they change a lot, even if they keep their genius and figure. Some average people with good common sense often turn out to be splendid priests.

b)

Do not rely too much on appearances.

The novices seem holier than they are. The young novice, when he enters the novitiate, is a beginner. I do not count the exceptions. In the novitiate the first stones are laid, not the last tiles. It would be naive to conceive of the novitiate as a time in which one treasures in abundance in order to then live off the income. The novices, at the end of the novitiate well done, present for virtue all the good and bad qualities of the young: they are generous, impulsive, inconstant, cheerful, scandalized, very sensitive to love and to the deviation of the superiors and of those who are not and seedbed of passions more dormant than mortified or, at least, not as much as it could seem to a profane person. They have not yet passed through the crucible of trial and, since they are young, it cannot be said that they have persevered for a long time in doing good. The years of novitiate in a hothouse plan are not a sign of great perseverance, nor is their atmosphere of contrariness, in spite of all the trials to which it subjects them. The majority of the novices, after the novitiate, would not be able to endure alone and for a long time the religious life in the open, with all the normal incentives of life. This is an evident proof of weakness, since other priests, apparently with much less virtue than them, endure it with ease.

p.L Canonical aspect of religious life

They need, therefore, to continue to be paternally watched over and gradually manumitted….. In the passage from the

novitiate to the studentate, all care is little; and I am not speaking of a care of a few days, but of years. Their souls look like a sowing field in the springtime of good years: “It shows in hope the certain fruit”, provided that water and sun accompany them in time and they are not carried away by some storm. Their virtues are not mature. More than trained, they are informed-instructed-and on track. They still have many more years to go before they reach a reasonable level of security. Stable mastery of the passions and strong habits for good are the fruit of more years of perseverance in doing good.

C)

Do not demand or assume more of them than you can from them.

CAN REASONABLY BE GIVEN.

It is not sane to ask for pears from an elm tree. If the novices are no more than beginners, more or less successful and generous, it is not fair to ask and expect from them virtues of perfection or to suppose that, because they have passed the novitiate, they no longer need paternal care, solicitous and full of delicacy. Nor is it reasonable to demand of them burdens that venerable men in the same congregation, who are combing gray hairs, could not bear, considering them as bad if they are unable to bear them. The violent tremors that arise when one least thinks of the souls of so many young men after having completed an exemplary novitiate, should make us think seriously about the need to continue to care for them, from the spiritual point of view, after leaving the novitiate, with the same solicitude as in the novitiate itself.
d)

Generosity for impulsive effort.

The novices are docile and generous, and when they are given a cheer, they all become heroes. It is the impetus of the youth, ready and ready for good or for evil, according to what is directed to them: the effort of the sporting struggle excites and warms their spirit; the monotonous ease bores and enervates them. They are strong for the violent and varied impulse, and weak for the energetic perseverance. Very many would be able to bite their tongues and spit in the face of anyone who would tempt them blatantly against purity; but perhaps they would not long endure the incentive of an occasion that arose innocently. They may seem to be very obedient, but do not usually leave them alone in the library, e.g., because they will get their hands on forbidden books, and their unhealthy curiosity will be stronger than their obedience. It is necessary to take advantage of the generosity and the effortful impulse, superior to its habitual virtue, for varied companies of own maturity.

C.2. The novitiate e)

Summary of pros and cons.

“They look at what I drink and not how thirsty I am…” We must count the falls, but also the maturities. Barren lands produce neither wheat nor thistles; fertile lands can produce everything in abundance, and with work and the grace of God they can become lands of blessing only. The value of a novice is the algebraic sum of pros and cons 4.

25. 1. gregation:

They are

Novice testing

required

for the aspirant and for the congregation. They constitute the test of endurance, capacity and mutual convenience, prior to the mutual commitment. They should include all the neuralgic points of religious life: poverty, chastity, obedience, stability, balanced character, scientific capacity and robust health for the ministries of the congregation. 2. They must be reasonable and prudent. They should be proportionate to the endurance that can logically be expected of a novice. It would not be logical to burden a boy with weights that only a strong man in full development could bear. If many professed religious were subjected to very hard trials, it is morally certain that they would fail in their vocation. However, without those tests that God does not want, they play their role. A novice subjected to trials beyond his strength would fail. The problem is to know whether the strength was too little or the trials too great and imprudent. Without reaching failure in the vocation, excessive trials produce more harm than good: bitterness and resentment against superiors, because they feel persecuted and misunderstood; deformation of character, loss of confidence, closing in on themselves, resolving all difficulties on their own without turning to anyone. 3. Without much scientism or packaging. More than scientific formulas, which, by force, will have to be reserved for some rare case, what is needed is a good eye, perfected with readings and studies of practical psychology. 4. For the normal and clear majority, the ordinary life of the novitiate is sufficient proof. That is why its organization

must be in such a way arranged that it really proves to be a test in all aspects or neuralgic points of religious life, One sometimes hears the elders repeated, as if lamenting the present lack of regularity: “Test them well, test them well!” One should ask them; “And with you, what tests did you

do?” The life of the novitiate gives the impression that it is harder than the ordinary community life of every order. Whoever lives it well in every way, outwardly and inwardly, offers sufficient guarantees of being a good religious without the need for further trials. One can change later on, certainly; but no kind of testing confirms in grace, nullifies freedom or excuses the directors of students from a very solicitous care, thinking that they are already formed or attributing all changes to immaturity, lack of consistency of the novitiate or lack of testing. The best novice can be lost: experience teaches much about this. The twenty years, with or without trials, are susceptible to profound changes, because the poorly mastered life of passion is in the fullness of its strength. The stable assimilation of the spirit of the novitiate-of the order-supposes many years of struggle and victory. In the meantime, some first novices turn out to be students of third or fifth year…

5,

For the dark minority, the test is the same noviacentuando a little more requirements in the aspect.

doubtful.

The real value of the trial of the novitiate, well lived in appearance, depends on the psychological maturity, freedom and spontaneity of action-that they are not inhibited by fear-and on the uprightness of intention of the candidate. When the rightness of intention is lacking, although apparently they behave well, they are not convincing: they are like silver coins, but made of lead, they do not sound…; they lack a certain something. This is rarely the case. The result of the tests must give first, second and third class novices; the same in science as in virtue. So it is in all things. To these must be added those who are frankly

useless. As long as the minimum is sufficient for the purposes of the congregation and the candidates are necessary, there would be no reason to exclude any of those classified as sufficient. But let the sufficiency be real; for there are those who are very accomplished in every respect who are more of a burden than a benefit. Those who promise the most do not always perform the best. It also happens here not infrequently that some are the sick ones and others the ones who die. Experience teaches one not to become a prophet and to entrust things more to God. Proof of poverty

26. The love of luxury and avarice are contrary to religious poverty. If these tendencies should manifest themselves so strongly

C.2. The Novitiate

If the mind of the priest would be a meanness of heart or irrepressible worldly vanity, it would be necessary to eliminate it. Neither the avaricious nor the slave of the lust of the eyes can be priests according to the heart of Christ. But if the candidate accepts as good and lives the ordinary life of the novitiate without complaint of his own or of others, no further proof is needed to admit him. And yet, the ordinary life of the novitiate in its external aspects, even if it is very sincere, does not presuppose in the novice a high spirit of poverty, nor does it constitute a costly test for the majority. . It will be so for the rich and independent, accustomed to dispose of everything according to his will, who overnight has to depend on someone else for everything. It will be the same for the well-to-do young man who suddenly abandons his comforts for the sober life of the convent. Even for the latter, with more flexibility of accommodation because of his youth, as poverty, only the first encounter is difficult; as a cause of humiliation before others, it lasts longer. To wear clothes and shoes used by

others; to eat modest but sufficient meals, to live in an elementary room or a small room, to do for himself many things that others would do for him at home; for most novices, especially if they have gone through the pre-novitiate of the apostolic college, they do not represent an appreciable difficulty. Sweeping, mopping, *etc.*

On the other hand, novitiates are usually splendid buildings, perhaps lacking in luxuries and comforts, but well built and a hundred times better than the family home. The comfort of the latter is compensated by the satisfaction provided by the spaciousness and even the beauty of the lines of the former. The young man is accommodating and has little difficulty with these changes. Some strangeness in the early days, and so on. The children of poor or modest families improve their economic condition by taking the vow of poverty. There is, therefore, the danger that the vow is made with the lips and not with the heart - son of the good accommodation more than of the spirit of sacrifice -, arising later dormant desires with the change of circumstances, which will give rise to the friar hoarder and pescetarian, or to the careless and crafty with other people's money for his own whims or to the one who, having made profession of poverty, does not stop murmuring if he is not provided a life of authentic rich. I believe that we are more in danger of all these evils who, according to our vow of poverty, can possess in particular and receive, with permission, gifts made to our person. And the greater the danger, the lesser the personal renunciation, all other things being equal. For this reason, the vocations of the very poor must be tested more in this regard. To have always received everything and to have never sacrificed anything, even if it was due to material impossibility, are circumstances that are not very favorable to the authentic spirit of poverty. There remains in the background I do not know what subterranean craving? The lure of being rich, at least of possessing

enough for the satisfaction of whims, it dazzles as an illusory happiness not experienced. The truth is that among the poor poor there is no more spirit of poverty than among the rich rich.

Against this root of imperfections and sins, it is not an effective remedy to make the novices go through a practical poverty far superior to that used by the professed members of the congregation, because they soon realize that it will not last more than a season and they will not embrace it wholeheartedly. The generality of the novices will not aspire to greater poverty than that practiced by the majority of the professed. If it is imposed on them, they will suffer it passively, like a purgatory, sighing deep down for a more comfortable life, and accepting it and accommodating themselves to it from the heart when it presents itself. Except in the case where the director is one of those capable of changing the sign of an order. On the other hand, to impose an excessive poverty, superior to the love that one possesses to assimilate it voluntarily, makes hearts dull and creates inferiority complexes that deform the character: they become shy and timid because they are ashamed to appear in public with excessively old clothes or deteriorated footwear. A saint would not do that, it is true; but we must not forget that the novice is a beginner. The same thing would happen to religious with thirty or forty years of vocation, {how much more to a novice! However, the rigid trials in this point show the capacity for endurance, for love of vocation, and always involve an act of overcoming, which, if done for God, even if it is half by force, has its merit.

From all that has been said I deduce:

a To educate the majority of our young people well in the matter of poverty with proportionate and fruitful trials: sobriety of life according to the spirit of the Order, without luxuries of any kind or miseries. And as in extraordinary mortifications, not so much to impose it as to make them ask for it. Because only what is voluntary lasts. b) Sometimes an energetic and well calculated test of poverty can be useful to humiliate some presumptuous person and to prove his vocation. c) To eliminate without contemplation the incorrigible murmurers and complainers of the established conditions of poverty; because, more or less laborious, in the end, they are a gift. Proof of chastity

27. Chastity needs no other tests than those presented by nature itself. He who comes out of them with flying colors is useful, and he who enters into others to test his strength will probably come out scorched. To be successful is to be understood strictly, tending rather to rigor. Rigor in this matter is mercy towards our holy mother Church and the interested parties themselves. However…, “ne quid nimis”.

C.2. The Novitiate

In order to be able to judge rightly in a matter of such importance, it is necessary to know the past, even in broad and precise outlines. Natures that are temperamentally very rebellious to this virtue, especially if they have lived in the past with full knowledge and deliberation, if they are not accompanied by an energy of will that can withstand any test and a deep piety and abnegation, even if they relapse into their former habits after having apparently achieved the contrary, are contraindicated for the priesthood, even if they show signs of much repentance after their falls. Grace operates in them with too much opposition, and miracles are not repeated every day. It is difficult for them to give up the vices: they return to the charge later, and experience

teaches how many are the open failures; the hidden ones, only God knows. The chastity of our novices should not be the fruit of a prolonged hyperculture in order to win, but of ordinary cultivation, taking into account their age. Whoever needs special, solicitous and prolonged care to remain chaste does not have the vocation of a priest; because the special care will pass with the novitiate, and the inordinate inclination of vice will remain a question mark that is very difficult to answer favorably. The result of the test of chastity can be verified many times by the director and always or almost always by the confessor. It is very convenient to go all together, according to certain principles or general lines, unifying criteria, so that the unfortunate case of one building up what the other tears down does not occur. J. To the beginner who suffers serious falls, to warn him in all seriousness, without ever threatening him with expulsion, that these sins are incompatible with the aspiration to the priesthood, and, if he does not progress quickly, to eliminate him soon. 2° Six months seems to me a generously ample term to eliminate every habit of grave sin. Whatever goes beyond that time must be accompanied by very special circumstances to tolerate it. It would be a question of ungrateful lands even in the hyperculture of the novitiate. What will it be later when it is abandoned to itself? 3.0 Fulminant elimination, by means of the confessors, of those who sin with accomplice. Instruct the extraordinary confessors about these norms and never speak about it to the novices. 4.0 Those with persistent and incorrigible homosexuality should not be allowed to pass, even if they do not commit grave sins. 5.0 If some young man with more than ordinary qualities, in spite of his falls, should show a fervent desire to go forward, one could, as a trial, send him out into the world for a year or two, leaving the door open for him to return later, provided he is completely corrected. Ordinarily, he will not return.

P.L Canonical aspect of religious life

Obedience test

28. In obedience, as in the other virtues, it is necessary to look rather to the future, because during the novitiate there are neither difficult cases nor are there usually isolated notable faults that merit expulsion, if those who are in charge have the tact to govern. It is not the magnitude of the faults that must be appreciated, but the obedient or rebellious attitude, that is to say: whether or not there is a spirit of obedience. The absence of it in the novitiate can be compatible with a passable mechanical conduct of religious life. The tests in this regard can be multiplied indefinitely. The difficulty lies in not going beyond the right middle ground so as not to bore anyone unwisely. Some problems (P.) and their solution (S.):

Q.-Declared external rebellion against a superior. It will occur rarely, even in those who want to leave, if not recklessly exacerbated. S.-If it is not the product of some momentary passion-not repeated-followed by prompt and complete repentance, expulsion.

P.-Frequent, deliberate, contemptuous and incorrigible rebellion to equals, but with certain authority: admonitor or group leader, *etc.* S.-If after repeated warnings and penances that humiliate him/her, he/she does not mend his/her ways, expulsion.

P.-Strike of arms down: they do not say no externally, but they get “on the nose” and, with respect to their obligations, apparently they pretend to do, but in reality they do their whim. S.-To unmask them in private; if no progress is seen, also in public; and if not even then progress is achieved, and fast, expulsion.

Q.-The habitual interior insubordination of certain arrogant spirits “a natura” full of their own judgments. Externally punctual, in the material, but they give the sensation of always having their own way in their inner selves and living as if in a perpetual state of egolatry. They do what they are commanded, but they do not bend inside. They are usually smart for the theoretical and they know they are; although they do not say it, they are convinced of it. S.-It is very difficult to bring them down from the macho and it is difficult to eliminate them, because they are smart and quite disciplined. The final result, if they remain

in the congregation, is often unsatisfactory. Everything is too small for them and they are a torment for the superiors, because they are difficult to obey: demanding in their dealings, glassy in character, willful, caustic, dogmatizing, deified. The best of them spend their lives in their ivory tower and do not get involved in the life and ideals of the community. It would be better to make the “sacrifice” of eliminating them; but since it costs so much because they are smart… later it is paid.

Q.-Persecuted attitude when punished or reprimanded. S.-Very bad sign, if repeated, in spite of the paternal warnings to make them realize it. If in spite of everything they are not corrected, it will be necessary to eliminate them.

Q.-Frequent irregularities in small things, together with habitual dissipation, lukewarmness, small-mindedness, lying…, all this together with “much love of vocation,” perhaps written with i>, and determination to go forward. S.-Their incapacity for great ideals will make them useless and, in the last analysis, they will have to be thrown out or they will leave,

Q.-Frequent disobedience in small things, because of lightness and little age, together with kindness of heart and sincerity, B.-You have to have a father's soul with them; love them truly, never tire of warning them and even of punishing them benignly, patiently, until you see if age gives them more weight. Perhaps the sin lies in having admitted them to the novitiate before their time. If in spite of the warnings, paternal punishments and elapsed time they continue in their perpetual lightness, it would be necessary to eliminate them, because it would be something connatural. d)

Physical health test

29* Health is necessary during and after the novitiate. If he endures ordinary life, he has all the guarantees. Without health, the novice is unable to form himself well in any sense: intellectually, because he will not be able to study; in piety, because he loses the desire to pray; in the habits of community life, because he needs special schedules and food and easily acquires the complex of taking refuge in illness in order not to work-"maulitis"-or at least not to make great efforts, with which he acquires the predisposition for a comfortable ministerial life. And since the friar, although he does not work, has in the community the budget assured…, it is an invitation to persevere in the acquired habit. The friar who is convinced that the regal life is tasty and appetizing, neither rules, nor vows, nor superiors will take him out of it with any industry. Surely we could all cite more than one example in our respective orders.

P.l. Canonical aspect of religious life

But if a young person is temporarily unable to follow the rule in all its rigor because of transitory illness or functional disorders proper to youth subjected to such rigor, it does not

follow that he will not be able to follow it at the end of his critical development. It is preferable to soften the rule with regard to sleep, food, etc., before it is imperatively needed, and this with intermittences so as not to create habits, taking care that the substance of the acts of piety is not lacking and, if possible, that they are not altered. Long periods in the infirmary are one of the greatest dangers for the novices. Vocations are lost in nursing, and most of those that are not lost are lost. Nursing needs a great deal of vigilance and caution. A thousand times preferable to prevent an illness or infirmity than to have to cure it: “Pauci ex infirmitate meliorantur”. e)

Psychological health test

30* Community life needs people who are balanced and free of psychological defects. 1. Beware of the chronically scrupulous! Scruples in novices are not usually an extraordinary proof of a supernatural order. They are a simple psychological abnormality, transitory, proper to the development, not yet adapted to the new experiences. It is of no importance when it passes quickly. If it becomes chronic, it can incapacitate for the priesthood: it would be a case of psychasthenia more or less pronounced and more or less recoverable. 2. The deified or egomaniacs. Certain individuals seem to be deified: they can hardly do anything without turning around and stirring up their own excellence. They are proud, it is true; but not by choice or special malice, but almost by impossibility of doing otherwise. They present more or less pronounced cases of paranoia and are abnormal even if they are clever. They scarcely understand humility, nor are they practically dented by its reasons. Just as the rough understanding only at the cost of great efforts penetrates in the truth and as soon as the effort ceases it is forgotten, so these, as far as this virtue, that lives in them in perpetual unstable balance. Any setback upsets all their

plans and purposes of improvement, if they make them. They suffer from hyperesthesia of pride, arrogance, vainglory…. Everything that feeds these things fascinates and dazzles them, while they suffer from inborn rudeness to perceive the supernatural beauty of “ama nesclri et pro nihiio reputari”. Surrendered obedience is almost impossible for them. It is not chosen malice, but inherited nature and very difficult to reconcile with the vow of obedience and the joyful, fraternal and tasty community life. Even if they are materially obedient. 3. Neurasthenic. Eternally worried about their health, with the aggravating factor of having a guaranteed budget. Of almost null performance in the future and an unpleasant burden for the community. When the preoccupation begins at a young age, especially if the father or mother suffers from the same, they are hopeless. If they are pressed, they become dominated by fear until they take their vows; but, once they have taken them, they return to the charge. I have known several cases. 4. Melancholic, self-absorbed, abnormal. They are seized by strange scruples and the sensation of having lost faith, with suicidal impulses and despair. I have known three cases of boys, otherwise quite normal,

although self-absorbed. It is necessary to be alert to realize that it is a psychological abnormality that has nothing to do with morality and asceticism, but with the doctor. They advise to eliminate them, even if the attack is transitory, because they usually relapse with more gravity when they acquire full development. In order to avoid late failures of this type in pretended vocations, a family record is of great importance. At least, with unsatisfactory family antecedents, at the least symptom of inheritance, elimination can be calmly advised. f)

Capacity test

31 In order to perform the priesthood worthily, a fairly high minimum of ability is required. And one should not delude oneself that “being very good… holiness can make up for knowledge”, as in the Holy Curé of Ars, so often adduced. It is very difficult to make up for this decorous minimum. There may be many priests of Ars for talent; for holiness, very few…. Experience teaches how easily one loses what seems to be more than ordinary holiness and remains with what is certainly foolishness. Then they serve only “to say Mass badly”, to leave the congregation in a bad light everywhere and to scare away vocations. g)

Piueba de perseverancia o fidelidad

32 For me, a novice gives guarantees of security when he has a vital desire to do the things that need to be done, when he has a spirit of sacrifice and is docile. a) Vital desire. The grace does not lie in the novices keeping discipline, but in their wanting to keep it. The novice of little character or the very calculating one, when something difficult comes up, they keep quiet and go “forward”. But keeping quiet is not the same as approving “ex intimo corde”. They keep quiet, but inside they do not approve or they change their mental attitude. That is why novices often seem and are not. Most of the times they are neither hypocrites nor rebels: they act passively. Since they do not have a defined personality, they adapt themselves to the circumstances without acting out of deep and true conviction, and that is why it costs little to remove it. Let us warn that, without maturity of spirit, a deep conviction is almost impossible: it will always have much of sentimentality. The cold, calculating, talented boy, with his fair share of arrogance, must be won over first and foremost by “wanting sincerely”. It is difficult to apply other tests to him, because he tends to

see them on the fly and, if he is interested in following them, he will be capable of

PJ. Canonical aspect of religious life

He can bear them with all seriousness on the outside and laugh on the inside. He goes ahead and, when he has taken the vows and feels more secure..., he uncovers himself. b) Spirit of sacrifice. Above all, the exact fulfillment of duty: accuracy and spirit of work, supernaturalized in each of the distributions: spiritual and scientific. On this foundation can be built whatever prudence and generosity advise; without it, everything will be on sand.

c) Humility and docility. We will all accept without discussion that to live the religious life no more than moderately well, humility and docility are needed in no small degree, and that humility can only be reached through humiliation. Thus, the novice must be humbled and made docile. But there are ways in humiliating.... To humiliate, yes, but without mopping the floor with people on a whim. It is necessary to look for a basis of truth that humiliates by itself and that the humiliated person sees it and accepts it. To humiliate with excess, for no apparent reason, one who does not have much virtue, revolts, if the character is strong; it saddens, if it is sentimental, and displeases, if it is accommodating and profitable: it rarely profits. It almost always leaves resentments that are difficult to heal. It is of no use to humiliate if humiliations are not "accepted": if they are not received with a humble spirit. To correct a defect, it is necessary to recognize it sincerely first. It is not enough for the superior to say it is so and to punish it. It is necessary to change the mental and volitional attitude of the novice. In this work is where the educators are distinguished from the policemen: the former go to the root; the latter are content that branches do not sprout or that they are topped off. 5.

Bulk criteria

33. Here are some criteria, more or less accurate, by which I judge the novices: 1. A novice who does not work, who does not study and who shuns what is hard for him, cannot be good, even if he eats the saints in acts of piety. 2. Each sheep with its mate. When one knows or suspects that someone is wrong in something serious, look at who he tends to associate with, because he usually suffers from the same illness or will end up getting it if the dealings continue. It can be applied to questions of vocation, purity, homosexual tendencies, *etc.*

C.2. The Novitiate

3. The selfish, small of heart and short of ideals, if he does not recognize and shame himself and strives with tenacity for his own reformation, is no good for the priesthood or for religion. We religious must feel the glory of spending ourselves for others. The selfish person, even if he does not do bad things, does not feel the beauty of "it is better to give than to receive". He has little positive. 4. Those who, after repeated warnings, continue to boast of their own pride, and not only are not ashamed of it, but in the end wear it like a luxury suit, have no remedy even if they are exact compliers in everything else: after so much exhortation, they will end up saying what the village mayor said, although with a different meaning: "Here we are proud, but proud, which is a virtue like any other". They will not get off the donkey even if it throws them by the ears. 5. The untidy, abandoned and dirty on the outside, is often dirty on the inside as well. 6. The excessive fondness for something profane in itself, although compatible with the priesthood-music, poetry, mathematics, etc.-tends to warm the priestly ideal. One is what one thinks, what one wants, what one feels? When one of these ideals penetrates strongly and with

little control in a young soul, it displaces to second place all the others, even that of the priesthood, to the point of turning them into mere ideas without warmth or life. It is necessary to repeat to them many times that the priesthood and religious life are the substance, and all the rest is pure accident. 7. Those who are not very fond of eminently priestly studies inspire me with doubts about their perseverance. 8. He who is always involved in quarrels-with every reason on his part, of course-is either a bedbug or a stubborn person. 9. He who habitually does not obey the referee in the game, if he does not win a lot, will not obey the superior later on either. 10. He who gets angry like a madman only in the game, is not cured by not playing, but quite the contrary. The passion would carry it inside him and it will come out whenever something that matters to him is discussed. go. The habitual liar and cheat in the game will do it with everyone when it suits him. 12. Those who have “headaches” and the doctors cannot find them anywhere, are suspected of taking refuge in illness to excuse their poor intellectual performance if they are short; or because they want to leave and do not know how, and if they do not have them, they have to invent them; but only suspected. 13. Chronic scruples are almost always a vulgar psychological abnormality: they are psychasthenic, more or less pronounced and tolerable according to the degree of the disease. To suffer strong obsessive temptations against purity, it is not necessary a special intervention of the devil: a psychological imbalance is enough. 14. Behind the fraternal warnings sometimes hides the desire to be considered by the director. Here of the perspicacity… 15. Those who have a disordered and hidden affection for someone, often follow in his footsteps and become unable to tolerate his going with others because of jealousy; and there are cases in which they go so far as to accuse the director of friendships with others like those felt by them, so that he will intervene and separate them. Life nligios4.

16. Two kinds of people who never say anything unseemly: the very delicate and the very rotten, but very foxes, who strive to erase the trace of their own vice. But the latter usually have something sticky and unpleasant. 17. The virtue is not in the hair, but sometimes the hairs reveal the lack of virtue. Within the simplicity and clerical modesty, a certain degree of spontaneity is appropriate, and someone could use a trimming given in time. 18. To know how they think theoretically: classes, written exercises, compositions, *etc.* 19. To see how they think practically: ordinary conversation, family dealings, correspondence, games, *etc.* There are boys of theoretical intelligence who do everything well and, on the other hand, there are boys who are brilliant in the classes who do everything clumsily. 20. To measure piety, works: the exact fulfillment of duty, even if they are not seen. 21. To ascertain the goodness of a character, examine the affection that others have for him. 22.

To gauge ei common sense, to see if they respect him or laugh at him.

23.

To test his self-respect, to step on his corns “without realizing it”.

24. To humiliate a believer, not to remember him at all for a long time, or to remember him constantly for annoying offices, under others inferior to him in talent and ability, and to observe… 25. To catalog the ecclesiastical spirit, examine whether he feels interest or indifference and boredom for the liturgical functions proper to the order, for the most characteristically ecclesiastical ministries. 26. To test his

diligence and the spirit of ordered work, to know if he studies with constancy, what he is commanded and during all the prescribed time, and all this habitually and without apparent vigilance. Some are smart and hardworking, but in what they want. If they do not correct themselves and remain in the order, they will end up by being donkeys of powerful forces that will pull when and in what they want and not when and in what the master wants. 27. To monitor the slow changes in the health it is very useful and, in general, the monthly weight is enough. It is not rare that the decrease of weight signals some moral or physical crisis that they do not dare to say: scruples, vehement temptations, disgusts, apprehensions, fears, lack of sleep, *etc.* 28. In it, one can see very well if they are demanding, complainers, abrupt, long-suffering, profiteers.... 29. To test the spirit of poverty, to see the care that they have of the things of their use and of those of the community. There are egoistillas who take care of their own and treat the community's things with care. To put them also some office of which they can take advantage and to watch over them from afar. 30. To cure lordliness and effeminacy by nature or education, but recoverable, intensive sessions of pick, shovel and wheelbarrow, convincing them before that their manners are repulsive for normal men and women. Running away from hard manual labor is the best sign that they need it. So is making them play violent games. They usually run away from them. 31. Ei fulfiller of his duty, if, in addition, he is cheerful, communicative, playful and moved in recreation, is complete. The unemployed and "mystics" in

recreation, though they may seem good, have something of stagnant water and unhealthy psychology. 32. It is not a bad sign if the doer of his duty asks for a little more recreation, if he readily conforms to the decisions of his superior; for

grace does not destroy nature, and it is normal that nature, at that age, should ask for more expansion than retirement. 33. With those who are strongly passionate, especially with the proud, it is good to go directly to the bull in communications - to the domain of their passion - passing briefly by the rest and letting them know, as vividly as possible, that in them everything else, without that domain, is depreciated currency.

The trials of the novitiate must be taken as a whole. How far a bad quality has to go to be contraindicated for profession in an order is a question of prudence that cannot be subjected to a rule. It is necessary to study each case in particular. Convinced of the unfitness of someone for religious life, especially if it is due to unedifying conduct, it is necessary to eliminate him with all speed. It is better to send them away than to let them go. If one waits for them to make the decision, they will scandalize their own, contributing, at least, to form an atmosphere. However, human perspicacity is limited and we must go to the Lord again and again, asking him to cleanse his threshing floor by himself. May he free us from what in the future will be ballast and dead weight…; may he take away the chaff, leaving us only the grain, and have mercy on him when he is only a little late….

Chapter 3 RELIGIOUS PROFESSION Following the novitiate is the religious profession, by which the candidate is fully incorporated into his institute. We will examine religious profession here only from the canonical point of view, following the traces of the official Code of the Church. 1.

Notion, elements and division

34. 1. Notion. Religious profession is understood to be a contract by which a Christian faithful freely surrenders

himself to a religion through the taking of the three public vows of religion

duly accepted by the legitimate superior in the name of the Church. According to some authors, profession constitutes a bilateral contract which would establish a relationship of commutative justice between the religion and the religious. According to others, it is a contract of incorporation which gives rise to a relationship of distributive and legal justice. Whatever the case may be, what is certain is that, by virtue of profession, the religious institute receives the professed as a member legitimately incorporated into it and obliges itself to treat him as such, providing him with everything he needs for his life; and the religious, for his part, commits himself to live according to the constitutions of the institute and to contribute by his activity to the ends of the institute. 35, 2. Elements. Two distinct, but absolutely inseparable, elements can be distinguished in religious profession: a)

The surrender or donation of oneself to the religion, to

which corresponds to the legitimate

acceptance

by the competent superior.

b) The taking of vows, which constitutes a public act of religion made directly to God and which, when accepted by the legitimate superior in the name of the Church, gives them the character of public vows. Although distinct from one another, these elements are inseparable in the integral concept of profession. Thus, there will be no true profession without the emission of public vows, nor will this emission constitute the candidate a member of the religious institute

without the gift or donation of self accepted by the legitimate superior. The bond which binds the religious to his institute is a human bond; that which relates him to God through the vows is a transcendent bond which makes the person of the religious sacred and confers on the act of profession a character of true consecration.

36. 3. Division. Various kinds of profession are distinguished, according to the point of view from which they are considered. Thus: a) Temporary profession is that which is issued for a determined time (e.g., for a year or a triennium). b) Perpetual profession is that which is issued for the whole of life. 1 Cf. Tabera, o.c. n.242.

C.3. Religious profession

Some religious congregations do not have perpetual vows, but only temporary vows, which are renewed periodically (usually every year). But perpetual profession must always be preceded by some temporary profession in all religious institutes,

c) Simple profession is that in which simple vows are made, whether temporary or perpetual.

d)

Solemn profession

is one in which the following are issued

solemn vows, which, of themselves, are always perpetual. Temporary profession is always simple, although simple profession can be perpetual. Theologians and canonists discuss at length what constitutes the solemnity of the vows and, consequently, that of profession. Canon 1308 § 2 limits itself to saying that the vow “is solemn if it is recognized as

such by the Church; otherwise, it is simple". Of course, the solemnity of the vows does not consist in the greater or lesser splendor of the ceremony of their emission (theory of solemnity), since the external rite of the ceremony adds nothing to the substance or nature of the act. Nor does it consist solely in a certain spiritual consecration or blessing of the person making the vows (theory of consecration). The specific and essential difference between solemn and simple vows-at least by reason of the effects-consists in the perpetual, absolute, and irrevocable surrender and acceptance to religion, so that acts contrary to the vows are not only illicit, but also invalid if irritable. The vows pronounced in a solemn profession carry with them-in effect-the virtue of rendering invalid acts contrary to them (e.g., marriage, buying and selling, etc.). On the contrary, simple vows make such acts illicit only. For the same reason, simple profession-even if perpetual-does not incorporate the religious into his institute in such an absolute and irrevocable way as solemn profession. In short, the ultimate reason for the solemnity of the vows consists in the recognition and will of the Church, which wishes to give them that character and to confer such effects on them. For this reason, the Church can confer the effects of solemn vows on simple perpetual vows, as in fact happens with the simple and perpetual vow of chastity made in the Society of Jesus, which renders invalid the future attempted marriage. And, in a similar way, the Church can suppress in whole or in part the juridical effects of solemn vows. For the same reason, the irrevocability of the surrender by solemn profession is not absolute-although it is so called-since the Church can revoke it. The difference between the simple vow and the solemn vow is to be sought, in the end, in the recognition and will of the Church.

The Church can also declare solemn a vow that was previously simple (and this without renewal of the vow) and declare simple a vow that was solemn at the time of its emission 2 3.

Before the promulgation of the Canonical Code, a distinction was made between tacit and express profession. The former was considered to have been made by the novice, by making certain acts proper to the professed after the time of novitiate had concluded. The Canon Code definitively abrogated this kind of profession by declaring that, for the validity of any religious profession, it is required, among other things, that it be express (can. 572, § 1, 5.°). 2.

Requirements for the profession

For the sake of clarity, it is useful to distinguish between the requirements for the validity of any kind of profession and those specific to the perpetual profession. a)

37.

For the validity of any kind of profession

The Canonical Code (cn.572) determines that for the

validity of any religious profession, whether simple or solemn,

The following six conditions are required, in addition to those that may be required by the constitutions of the institute where it is professed: i.a

Legitimate age according to the canon rule

573.

Canon 573 says: “Anyone who is to make religious profession must have completed sixteen years of age in the case of temporary profession, and twenty-one in the case of perpetual profession, whether solemn or simple. “3 As we have already said in speaking of taking the habit, the years for making profession-sixteen or twenty-one-must be completed, so that profession cannot be made on the anniversary of taking the habit, but on the following day (cf. cn. 34 § From this it follows that simple profession cannot be made validly earlier than two days after the sixteenth birthday, nor perpetual profession earlier than one day after the twenty-first birthday. For since one cannot validly take the habit until the day after his fifteenth birthday, nor make his first profession until the day after the anniversary of the taking of the habit, it follows that one who was born, e.g., on January 1, cannot take the habit until January 2 of the year in which he reaches his twenty-first birthday. 3 In the case of external Sisters in monasteries of nuns, it is required for the validity of the first profession that they have completed at least twenty years of age* and -ueintiróis for the perpetual profession (a.43 of the Statutes published by the S. C. R. on March 25, 1961: AAS 53 [1961} 371-380).

fifteen years of age, nor make his first profession until January 3 of the year in which he reaches the age of sixteen. Perpetual profession cannot be made until the day after one’s twenty-fifth birthday, even if the required three years of temporary profession have been far exceeded. What is prescribed in canon 577, § x, concerning the renewal of vows on the same day as the anniversary, cannot always be applied to perpetual profession, which cannot be made until

the day after one has completed one’s twenty-fifth year, as is prescribed in canon 573.

2. a

What

admits you to the profession

the

superior legitim mo, ACCORDING TO THE CONSTITUTIONS.

For the purposes of admission, the legitimate superior is the general or provincial, with the vote of the council or chapter, or both, if so prescribed by the constitutions (cf. en.543). The vote of the council or chapter is deliberative for first temporary profession, and only consultative for subsequent perpetual, solemn, or simple profession (en.575.2). It is also deliberative for the perpetually professed who passes to another religion in which, immediately after the novitiate, he makes perpetual profession.4 Some constitutions require the deliberative vow even for perpetual profession, and the Sacred Congregation admits it as such, since this greater rigor is not contrary to the Code. The superior referred to in the canon is the one internal to the religion; not the bishop or his delegate, even in diocesan congregations. This does not detract from the fact that in diocesan congregations the ordinary can demand that the admission made be communicated to him in order to confirm it 5.

3. a

What

valid novitiate has been preceded by a valid novitiate according to

CANON 555.

We have discussed this at length in the previous chapter. 4. a

What

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GRAVE OR DOLE.

We have also examined this point when speaking of the novitiate. 5. a

What

the profession is expressed.

This means that tacit profession is not sufficient (as was admitted before the Code), but must be expressly manifested in words, in writing or by signs that sufficiently express the will of the professed. In general, each institute has its own formula of profession, which is the one to be used when making the profession. 4 C. I. C., 14 July 1022: AAS 14 (1922) 52S. 5 Cf. Tabera, o.c. n.243; Goyeneche, CpR 17 (1036) p.27.

substantial votes, provided that it includes them implicitly, as is used in some institutes. The time for which the profession is made must be expressed in the same: one year, one triennium, forever. 6. that it be received, either by himself or by another, by the LEGITIMATE superior, ACCORDING TO THE CONSTITUTIONS,

It is one thing to admit the suitable candidate to make his profession and another to receive the same profession at the moment of making it. The admission always corresponds to the major superior (general or provincial), as we have said above. Reception, on the other hand, can be done by the major superior himself or, in his name, by the local superior or by another person expressly delegated to do so - presumed delegation is not sufficient - even if he does not belong to the order or congregation (e.g., a secular priest who is a relative or friend of the one to be professed). The delegate to receive profession cannot subdelegate, unless the faculty to do so is expressly granted to him (cf. en. 199 § 4). The priest or chaplain who, invited by the superior, celebrates Mass and directs the entire act of profession, does not properly receive profession; in such a case he is only a qualified witness or a minister of the Ceremonial, but the one who receives profession is the competent superior or her delegate present at the act. In institutes where the profession is made in the hands of the superior, with her name appearing in the formula of profession, the priest who attends the ceremony, as representative of the ordinary, has only the character of a witness, and his presence does not affect the validity of the profession in any way. b)

38.

For perpetual profession

The Code states the following (cn.572 § 2):

“For the validity of perpetual profession, solemn or simple, it is necessary, in addition, that simple temporary profession have preceded it, according to canon 574” Canon 574 reads as follows: “§ 1. In any order, whether of men or of women, and in any congregation of perpetual vows, after the completion of the novitiate, and except as provided for in canon 6346, the novice must make, in the same novitiate house, before perpetual, solemn, or simple vows, the profession of simple vows valid for three years, or for a longer time if the time remaining until the age necessary for perpetual profession is attained, unless the constitutions require annual professions. § 2. The legitimate superior, renewing the religious’s temporary profession, can extend the said term, but not beyond another three years”. 6 Canon 634 refers to a religious in perpetual vows who passes to another religion also in perpetual vows. After the new novitiate, he must make perpetual profession in the new religion, without any temporary profession preceding it.

C.3. Religious profession

Exceptions to this first profession ad triennium are: 1. ° Religions that do not have perpetual vows, but are renewable periodically (for a year, a biennium) for life, as indicated in the canon itself. 2. Institutes whose members make vows with the formula for as long as they live in the congregation, since when they voluntarily leave the institute or are dismissed by their superiors, they are ipso facto free from vows. 3. Those professed with perpetual vows who pass to another religion, who, after the novitiate, make perpetual profession, omitting temporary profession (cf. can. 634). Note that the triennium is to be computed from day to day, but perpetual profession can be made on the same anniversary day as the first profession (cf. can. 34, § 3, 5.5°);

unless on that same day one reaches the age of twenty-one, in which case perpetual profession could not be made on that same day, but on the following day, according to the prescriptions of canon 573.

The superior who can extend the temporary profession, even for a second three-year period, is the major superior indicated by the constitutions themselves, which will determine if the council or the chapter must vote for it, and with what kind of vote (deliberative or consultative). The extension can be for a triennium, a year, six months, three months, etc., according to the circumstances and the reasons that make the extension advisable. The new statutes of the external sisters prescribe six years of temporary vows (a. 12 § 1). PERPETUAL VOWS AND MILITARY SERVICE. The decree Militare servitium, promulgated by the Sacred Congregation of Religious, with the approval of Pius XII, on July 30, 1957" establishes in its second article that "no one can be validly admitted to perpetual profession before completing military service or before having been declared absolutely unfit for it or for any reason is juridically free from it in perpetuity". In Spain, fortunately, this problem does not exist, since the Spanish Government expressly declares in article 15 of the Concordat with the Holy See of 27 August 1953 that "clerics and religious, whether professed or novices, are exempt from military service, in accordance with canons 121 and 614 of the Code of Canon Law". 7 Cf. C. I. C., 1 March 1921: AAS 13 (1921) 177. The same Interpreting Commission declared (June 29, 1918) that canon 574 did not affect the Society of Jesus, since in the Society simple vows are taken with the perpetuity proper to it.

Term of temporary profession

Here is the official legislation of the Church:

“At the end of the term of temporary profession, the religious, according to canon 637, shall make perpetual profession, solemn or simple, according to the constitutions, or shall return to the century. But during the time of temporary profession he can be dismissed by the legitimate superior in accord with canon 647, if he is not considered worthy to make perpetual vows” (en.575 § 1).

We will return in its corresponding place to canons 637 and 647 to which the canon just cited alludes. 4, 40.

Rite of profession

The Code determines the following:

“In making religious profession, the rite prescribed by the Constitutions is to be observed. § 2. The document of profession, signed by the professed and at least by the one before whom it was made, is to be kept in the religious archives; and in addition, in the case of solemn profession, the superior who received it is to communicate it to the pastor of baptism, according to canon 470.2” (can. 576).

The time and place of profession is accidental, since it can be made in any place, on any day and at any hour. In many constitutions, however, it is prescribed that it be made within the Mass or in union with it. By decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites of July 1, 1961, there have been approved, in addition to the votive Mass for asking and fostering religious vocations, one for the day of profession of religious, and another for the day of profession of religious women. These two profession masses are votive masses of the second class, and the mandate or consent of the

respective ordinary (provincial or bishop) is required for their celebration. Important warnings

1. a Profession must be made absolutely, without any condition. It would be null if any clause contrary to the substance of the religious life were placed in it. 2. a Freedom in making profession requires that it be made with the intention of binding oneself to it. If the professed lacks the intention to profess, the profession is not valid in the internal forum, nor are the vows in conscience binding; but in the external forum, it is considered valid as long as the lack of intention is not legitimately proven. Of course, he who pronounces before the superior the formula of profession without the intention of binding himself to it would sin mortally by the enormous

fraud and the incredible hypocrisy that it entails; and if he is a cleric, he would incur the penalties of which canon 2387 speaks when his profession is declared null and void.

3o When profession is made within the Mass, after the recitation of the preces preceding communion, the celebrant receiving the profession takes the Sacred Host in his hands and turns to the professed, who, one by one, read the formula aloud and immediately receive Holy Communion. 5.

Renewal of the profession

41. The renewal of the profession can be juridical or by devotion. The first is that which is made at the end of a temporary profession by prescription of law. The second is that which is made privately, by particular devotion, or in public, on determined dates, by prescription of the constitutions. The Code deals only with juridical renewal, and provides as follows: “§ x. When the term for which the

vows were made has expired, they must be renewed without the least interruption. § 2. Superiors, however, with just cause, can permit the renewal of temporary vows to be anticipated for a certain time, provided that it does not exceed one month” (en.577).

The following should be noted about this juridical renewal: 1. a It can and must be made on the anniversary of the previous profession, before or after the time of profession (cf. en.34 § 3,5.°). The reason for not having to wait until the following day (as at the end of the novitiate) is so that the religious does not remain without the vows for a single instant. However, as we have already said, if it is not a question of renewal of vows, but of perpetual profession, one would have to wait until the following day if the date coincided with the completion of the twenty-first year (cf. can. 573). In this case, so that the religious does not remain without vows for a single moment, he should renew temporary profession for one day on his birthday and make perpetual profession on the following day. 2. a The renewal must be done publicly, that is, it must be received by the competent superior and according to the formula of the constitutions. A secret renewal is not sufficient, since it would not produce juridical effects. 3. a Renewal is obligatory, even if the time until perpetual profession is very short (e.g., only one day). s Cf. Tabera, o.c. n.246.

However, the omission of renewal, although illicit, does not invalidate the following profession, provided one has remained in temporary vows for the entire three-year period, or even longer, if age or the constitutions require it. 4. The superior competent to authorize the anticipation of the renewal mentioned in the second paragraph is the same superior who admits to profession and does not require the

vote of the council or of the chapter. A just cause for permitting this anticipation shall be devotion, because of a great feast, the fact that the professions of many coincide on the same day, and other similar reasons. But only the renewal of temporary vows can be anticipated, not the making of perpetual profession, which is to be made after the full three-year period and one day after - at least - one's twenty-first birthday. As for the renewal by devotion, it can be done privately as many times as one wishes (e.g., every day after communion) and is an excellent act of piety indulgenced by the Church. The public renewal must be made when prescribed by the constitutions and in the manner determined by them. Both are ordered to revive the memory of the obligations contracted, to confirm oneself more in one's vocation, *etc.* But neither of the two produce juridical effects, and thus, by themselves, they could not validate the invalidly issued profession. 6.

Rights and duties of temporary professed members

42, Canon 578 determines them with precision in the following way:

"Those professed in temporary vows of whom canon 574 speaks: i.° They enjoy the same indulgences, privileges, and spiritual graces as those professed in solemn vows or perpetual simple vows; and if they should die, they have the right to the same suffrages. 2.0 They have the same duty to observe the rules and constitutions; but where the obligation of the choir is in force, they are not subject to the law of reciting the divine office in private, unless they have received major orders or the constitutions expressly command it. 3.0 ^ They lack active and passive voice, provided the constitutions do not expressly determine otherwise; but the period of time for enjoying active and

passive voice, if the constitutions say nothing, shall be counted from the first profession".

This private renewal, after celebrating Mass or receiving Holy Communion, carries with it a partial indulgence of three years for all religious of any order or congregation (cf. Preces et pia opera n.756). No formula is prescribed for it.

C.3, Religious pro]fessionals

"The obligation of the private recitation of the divine office coming from the constitutions alone will bind the same as the constitutions, that is, not under sin if they do not expressly prescribe it in this way. 2. Unless there is a special indult, the professed in temporary vows do not enjoy a special title to ordination (as do solemnly professed in virtue of poverty, or perpetually professed in virtue of the common table), and thus, in this respect, they are similar to secular clerics (can. 982). Even in regular orders, superiors cannot give them dimissorial letters except for first tonsure and for minor orders, never for major orders (cf. 01.964, 3.° and 4.0). 7.

Effects common to all professions

43. Religious profession, even if it is the first temporary profession, produces, among others, the following effects in the one who makes it i0. 1. 1° It originates a juridical bond between the professed and the religious institute, by which he is incorporated into it as its member, with the right to be treated as such, at the same time that he remains subject to the dominative and economic power of the superiors. For this reason, the superior has the power to directly annul the private vows made by the professed after profession (en. 1312), except that of passing to a closer religion. 2.0 By the emission of public vows, the religious is consecrated to God

and deputed to divine worship, not by particular devotion, but by the authority of the Church, as a sacred person. As such, he enjoys the canonical privileges proper to clerics (en.614), even if he is a layman or novice. 3.0 With profession, all vows made before profession (e.g., that of pilgrimage to the Holy Land) are suspended as long as the professed remains in the religion (en. 1315 § 1). But if the professed returns to the century, those vows are revived, unless they have lapsed (e.g., because the term for which they were made has elapsed). 4.0 The professed, and even the novice of any religion, cannot be a sponsor for baptism or confirmation, unless there is urgent necessity and unless he has express permission at least from his local superior (nn. 766,4°; 796,3°). If it is 10

Cf. TABERA, O.C. h.250; SCHAEFER, O.C. H.2Ó7.

ordained in sacris, he would need a license from his proper ordinary (cn.766,5.0). 5º Once profession has been made, all ecclesiastical offices which the cleric possessed at the time of entering religion become vacant without the necessity of any declaration (cn. 188.1.0); a year after any profession has been made, parochial benefices become vacant; after three years, other benefices become vacant (cn. 584). 6. A person professing temporary or perpetual vows in any religion cannot belong at the same time to any third order, even if he was affiliated to it before taking religious vows. But if he returns to the century free from vows, he revives the former enrollment in the third order (can. 704). Religious may, however, give their name to pious associations, except those whose laws, in the judgment of superiors, cannot be harmonized with the observance of the rule and constitutions (can. 693.4). 7.0 Upon profession, the religious

gains plenary indulgence by concession of Paul V to the regulars in the bull Romanus Pontifex of May 23, 1606.

8. 44,

Effects of simple profession

In addition to the ones listed above, common

to any profession, the Code points out those referring to acts contrary to the vows, to the ownership of material goods and to the renunciation of the same. Here are the respective provisions:

a)

Acts contrary to votes:

“Simple profession, whether temporary or perpetual, renders illicit, but not invalid, acts contrary to the vows, unless expressly provided otherwise. Solemn profession, on the other hand, if they are irritable, renders them also ini;¿id” (en. 5 79),

Thus, a marriage contracted by a professed religious in simple vows would be illicit, but valid; but a marriage contracted by one in solemn vows would be illicit and invalid. Acts of property carried out against the vow of poverty by a religious in simple vows would be illicit, but valid (e.g., a donation, a sale); but these same acts would be illicit and null and void carried out by a professed religious in solemn vows. By special privilege, in the Society of Jesus the simple vow of poverty disqualifies formed coadjutors from owning anything of their own; and by concession of Gregory XIII, the simple vow of chastity, taken after the biennium, constitutes a diriment impediment to marriage.

C.3. Religious profession

b)

Ownership of tangible assets:

“§ i. Every professed member of simple vows, whether perpetual or temporary, unless the constitutions determine otherwise, retains the ownership of his goods and the capacity to acquire others, except for the prescriptions of canon 569, § 2. But whatever he acquires by his industry or in consideration of religion, he acquires for religion. § 3. The assignment or disposition mentioned in canon 569, § 2, cannot be changed by the professed friar on his own account, unless the Constitutions permit it, but only with the permission of the superior general or, in the case of nuns, with that of the local ordinary and, if the monastery is subject to the regulars, of the regular superior, provided that such a change is not made in favor of religion, at least in a notable part of the goods. But if the religious abandons religion, such cession and disposition lose all their value” (en,580).

Regarding this canon, the following should be noted: i. In regard to the first paragraph, the religious in simple vows retains the naked ownership, but not the right to dispose licitly of things. Therefore, he must cede the administration and freely dispose of the use and usufruct, before professing, of the goods he has, unless the constitutions determine otherwise. The word industry, which is used in the second paragraph, means any work that the religious exercises, both material and spiritual: e.g., to build a piece of furniture, to paint a picture, to write a book, *etc.* Everything that is given to the religious, not for personal reasons of friendship or kinship, but because of the habit he wears, the fact of belonging to such a religious family, etc.,

is to be considered as acquired in consideration of religion, by analogy with canon 1536 § 1, which reads: “If the contrary is not proved, it is to be presumed that gifts made to rectors of churches, even of religious, have been made to the Church. “3,° As the Interpreting Commission declared on May 15, 1936, a license from the Holy See is required for a professed member to change in favor of his institute the cession or disposition of his goods alluded to in the third paragraph of this canon’ 580, at least when they refer to a notable part of those goods. The authors do not agree on what is to be understood by a notable part. Some are in favor of the fourth part, others of the third, etc., and others are of the opinion that in order to form an exact judgment, a comparison must also be established with

the totality of the goods that the religious possesses. The latter seems the most acceptable.

c)

Acts prohibited to the simply professed:

Professed in simple vows in religious congregations are not permitted: i.° To abdicate gratuitously the dominion of their goods by acts between living persons. 2.0 To change a will made according to the norm of canon 569.3 without the permission of the Holy See or, if the case is urgent and there is no time to obtain it, without the permission of the major superior, or of the local superior, if there is not even time to obtain it from the major.

The prohibition of n. i. also includes simply professed regulars before the sixty days preceding solemn profession, although they are not named in the canon; for during that period their condition in this regard is the same as that of

professed members of the congregation. This prohibition does not refer to onerous contracts of sale or exchange of goods for something equivalent, which the religious can make with the permission of their superiors; nor to small donations, which they can also make with the permission of their superiors, provided that with repeated small amounts they do not intend to dispose of the goods in fraud of the law. With this veto the Church intends to defend the religious against indiscreet requests, to assure their freedom of perseverance in the institute and, in case of departure, to provide for their needs, at least for some time.

á)

Renunciation of assets prior to profession so lemne.

“The professed of simple vows cannot do so validly before, but within sixty days preceding solemn profession, except for special indults granted by the Holy See, he must renounce in favor of whomever he pleases all the goods he possesses at the time, under the condition that he makes profession, § 2. Once profession is made, all acts necessary for the renunciation to take effect also before civil law are to be carried out immediately” (n. 581),

Let what we have said about the will of the novices be taken as repeated here. In addition, the following should be noted: a) This renunciation does not affect the validity of the profession, but only its legality. If it is omitted, the goods pass to the Order or to the Holy See, as the case may be.

Cf. Tabera, o.c. n,248.

C.3. Religious projection

b) It must be made within the said sixty days, so that, made before that time, the renunciation would be invalid, without

any juridical value. c) The renunciation refers to the goods that he currently possesses, either in themselves, or in the right that he has to them (e.g., the paternal inheritance), unless the constitutions or customs of the religion say otherwise about the latter. In the opinion of some authors, contradicting it others, the renunciation could be extended to the other goods that, by whatever title, could come to him after the profession. One thing is that the canon does not command to cede these other goods, and another thing is that it does not allow to cede them. d) The renunciation can be made in favor of anyone, and, therefore, in favor of the religion, in whole or in part, with the clauses that the renouncing person wishes, as long as nothing of the property, administration, use and usufruct of such goods is reserved. e) The renunciation is conditional of the future, and, therefore, it only has full effect after the solemn profession. If this one, for any cause, is not carried out, that one remains without any value. f) The renunciation cannot be changed when legalizing it before the civil law, since the renunciation is immutable once the solemn profession is issued, g) The renunciation could not be made after the solemn profession, for lack of capacity for it.

With regard to the goods that may accrue to the religious after solemn profession, not included in the renunciation just mentioned, the Canon Code determines the following: “After solemn profession, excepting also the special indults of the Apostolic See, all goods that in any way accrue to the regular: 1. In an order capable of possessing, they belong to the order: to the province or to the house, according to what the constitutions determine. 2. In an order incapable of possessing, they are acquired by the Holy See in property” (582).

To remedy the inconveniences that arose from mendicancy, the Council of Trent authorized that all monasteries and

houses, both male and female, including those of mendicants, could possess immovable goods. Only the Franciscans Minor and the Capuchins were excluded; to whom, however, the Holy See leaves the use, usufruct and administration of the goods referred to in number 2.0 of this canon. 9.

Effects of perpetual profession

45. In addition to the effects common to the temporary profession of which we have already spoken, perpetual profession produces certain special effects, among which are the following: l2 Cf. Sabino Alonso, commentary on canon 581 in Código de Derecho canónico 6, ed.

1. ° It definitively incorporates the professed into the religion, making him a permanent participant in the rights and obligations of the same. 2. ° The professed member enjoys active and passive voice, according to the norms of his own constitutions. 3.0 If he passes to another religion and leaves it before professing, he must return to the first (en.634). 4.0 If he illegitimately abandons the religion, he is considered an apostate from it (01.644 § 0" with all the canonical consequences (en.2385). 5.0 He cannot be expelled from his institute without a corresponding canonical process (cf. can. 49ff.). 6º "The professed of perpetual vows, whether solemn or simple, by disposition of law, loses the proper diocese which he had in the century" (in.585), 7º He can be promoted to major orders (in.964, 4.0) by title of poverty, common table, or other similar, according to the kind of vows (solemn or simple) and the norms of the constitutions (in.982 §§1 and 2). 8º He obtains total

remission of the temporal punishment due for his sins, so that if he dies immediately after his perpetual profession, he goes to heaven without passing through purgatory. This last effect, however, is not always and infallibly produced, but only when the professed makes, in making his perpetual profession, a heroic act of charity, in which case he obtains the same result at any other time of his life, before or after his perpetual profession. Let us listen to the Angelic Doctor explaining in the place cited with great caution and theological precision this marvelous effect: “One can reasonably maintain that by entering the religious life one achieves the remission of all sins. For if one can at once satisfy oneself for sins by almsgiving, as we read in the prophet Daniel: ‘Redeem your sins by almsgiving’ (Dan 4:24), a fortiori the total gift of oneself to the service of God by entering religious life is to be considered as sufficient satisfaction. This satisfaction surpasses all others, even that of public penance, “as holocaust surpasses sacrifice,” as St. Gregory says. This is why we read in the Lives of the Fathers that those who enter into religion attain the same grace as the baptized. 13 Cf. 2-2,189,3 ad 3. 14 Although St. Thomas uses the word entrance, this doctrine is usually understood only of perpetual profession, since it alone binds definitively and forever the one who makes it to the service of God.

C.3. Religious profession

However, even if the total remission of the remission of the punishment due for sins were not achieved, it would still be more useful to enter into religion than the pilgrimage to the Holy Land, from the point of view of advancement in good, which is more excellent than the absolution of punishments”.

We will return to this when we study religious profession from the theological point of view. ro.

Recognition of the profession

46. The Code determines precisely what must be done to convalidate a profession that was null because of some external impediment (e.g., lack of age, interruption of the novitiate, lack of delegation in the one who received it, etc.), or because of lack of internal consent of the professed, and also what must be done in the case of a doubtful profession. A religious profession which by some external impediment has been invalid is not convalidated by subsequent acts, but requires the correction of the Apostolic See, or that it be legitimately made again after the nullity is known and the impediment has disappeared. § 2. But if it was invalid for a merely internal lack of consent, it is convalidated when this consent is given, provided that the religion has not on its part revoked the consent, § 3. If there are grave arguments against the validity of the profession and the religious does not wish either to renew it or to ask for its correction as a precautionary measure, the case is to be presented to the Apostolic See.

Of the two solutions offered in the first paragraph, when it is a question of invalidity due to an external impediment, the easiest and simplest is that of repeating the profession before the competent superior, once the invalidity is known and the impediment has disappeared. For the cure in radice made by the Holy See, it would be sufficient to give a truthful exposition of the circumstances of the case, which could be done even without the knowledge and consent of the subject. However, it should not be done without the acquiescence of the person concerned and, in any case, this circumstance should be stated in the request to the Holy See. 2.0 The lack of internal consent will ordinarily come from the subject who made the profession; but, for the purpose, it would be the same if it came from the superior who admitted him or received him. In these cases, in radice

healing is not possible, because an indispensable element of the contract of profession is missing, that is, the mutual consent of the parties. It is necessary to give this consent, which can be done by

3.0 It is understandable that, when there are serious arguments about the validity of the profession, if the religious is not satisfied that he is a religious, he should refuse to renew the profession or ask for a correction, with a view to returning to the century if the nullity is proven. But, naturally, it is not convenient to prolong ambiguous situations, and for this reason the canon orders the case to be submitted to the Holy See so that it may decide what is to be done.

Profession in the article of death

47* St. Pius V granted in 1570 to Dominican novices the privilege of making profession in the article of death, with the right to participate in the indulgences and suffrages of the order 15; a privilege that by communication or by direct concession was extended to many orders. Pope St. Pius X granted in 1912 to the novices of any order or congregation the power to make profession at the hour of death with identical privileges l6* The Sacred Congregation of Religious declared that the concession of St. Pius X to all the novices of any order or congregation remains in force after the Code. 17 To make this profession in articulo mortis is required: 1. Simple postulants cannot make this profession. 2. D The formula proper to the institute is to be used for making the profession, but without indicating any time for the duration of the vows. 3.0 The major superior or the superior of the novitiate house shall receive this profession, even if the novice makes his profession outside the novitiate house

(e.g., in a clinic), provided that the novitiate has not been canonically interrupted. 4.0 The novice must be in the article of death in the judgment of the doctor. This declaration of the doctor could be substituted in the face of the manifest and evident gravity of the case, especially if there is danger of not arriving in time if the doctor is consulted.

Apart from the graces and privileges granted to the novice in case of death, such profession in articulo mortis has no other effect. Consequently: a) If after it the novice dies without making a will, his institute cannot claim for itself any of the goods or rights belonging to the deceased. 15 St. Pius V, constitution Summi sacerdotii, August 23, 1570. 16 St. Pius X, decree Spintuali consolationi, September 10, 1912: AAS 4 (1912) ff. 9. 17 S. C. R., December 29, 1922: AAS i$ (1923) i$6.

b) If the novice heals before the end of the time of novitiate, he is in the same condition as if he had not professed in articulo mortis. Therefore, he can freely return to the century and can be dismissed by his superiors; if he perseveres, he must complete the entire time of novitiate and make his profession at the end of it as if nothing had happened. c) Since its effects cease with the convalescence of the novice, it follows that, if he should again fall into imminent danger of death during his novitiate, he must make his profession again to participate in his privileges.

Chapter 4

OBLIGATIONS OF RELIGIOUS The Canon Code speaks of the principal obligations of religious in canons 592 to 612.

Obligations common to clerics. Obligations proper to the religious state.

We will examine each of these two groups in two separate articles. Article

i

COMMON OBLIGATIONS WITH CLERICS

;

Canon 592 establishes the fundamental principle: “All religious are subject to the common obligations of clerics spoken of in canons 124-142, unless something else is inferred from the context of the sentence or the nature of the matter.”

The doctrine of these canons, therefore, as far as religious are concerned, results in a twofold series of obligations common to clerics: positive and negative. i*.

Positive obligations

48* Those expressly indicated in the Code are the following: i.*.

Obligation to lead a holy life

Canon 124 reads as follows: “Clerics should lead a holier interior and exterior life than the laity and excel as models of virtue and good works”.

This fundamental rule could not be clearer and more evident. Placed clerics and religious, by a special vocation, are

The religious, as such, is obliged to aspire to Christian perfection with all his strength, as we shall see more fully in his place; and the cleric, as such, is obliged to aspire to Christian perfection with all his strength, as we shall see more fully in his place; and the cleric, as such, is obliged to aspire to Christian perfection with all his strength, as we shall see more fully in his place. The religious, as such, is obliged to aspire to Christian perfection with all his strength, as we shall see more fully in his place; and the cleric must shine with greater holiness than the non-priest religious himself, since, as St. Thomas says, and with him all theologians, the service of Christ at the altar “demands an interior holiness greater than that which the religious state demands” b Recent Pontiffs have insisted much on inculcating in clerics the holiness proper to their state2. Religious should frequently meditate on and apply to themselves those most wise pontifical norms. 2.a

Exercises of piety

Canons 125 and 126 prescribe some exercises of piety to be practiced by all clerics and, therefore, also by religious: “Let the local ordinaries see to it that all clerics frequently purify their consciences in the sacrament of penance. 2.0 That they devote some time each day to mental prayer, visit the

Blessed Sacrament, recite the holy rosary to the Virgin Mother of God and make an examination of conscience" (no. 125).

Religious and seminarians are required to go to confession at least once a week (en. 595 and 1367). Religious-as we shall see in due course-are prescribed, in addition, other practices of piety that are stricter, in keeping with their special duty to aspire to full Christian perfection. "All secular priests must, at least every three years, make spiritual exercises during the time indicated by the ordinary, in some pious or religious house designated by the same; and no one may be exempted from them except in a particular case, with just cause and with the express permission of the same ordinary" (en. 126).

Religious and seminarians are to practice the Spiritual Exercises every year (cn. 595 and 1367). 1 Cf. 2-2,184.8. 2 Cf. Pius X, Ex/iortatio ad clemtn eathol, 4 August 1908: AAS 41,555; Pius XI, Encyclical Ad catholici sacerdotii, 20 December 1908: AAS 41,555; Pius XI, Encyclical Ad catholici sacerdotii, 20 December 1903: AAS 28 (1936) s-53; Pius XII, exhortation Mentí nostrae, September 23, 1950: AAS 42 (roso) 657-702; JohnXXIII, encyclical Sacerdotit nostri primorSa: AAS sr (1959) 545-579.

C.4. Obligations of Religiousi 3.a

Reverence and obedience to your Ordinary

"All clerics, but principally presbyters, have a special obligation to show reverence and obedience to their ordinary" (en. 127).

In the exempt clerical religions, the ordinary is the major superior (en. 198), who usually receives the name of provincial superior. Religious also owe reverence to the

bishops or ordinaries of the place in which they live, although in different ways: those who are not exempt, with regard to the power of order and jurisdiction; those who are exempt, with regard to the power of order. On the obedience that the religious owe to the bishop or ordinary of the place, we will speak in the following chapter, when dealing with the exemption among the privileges of the religious. 4.a

Incessant study of the sacred sciences

“Clerics, once ordained as priests, should not abandon studies, principally sacred ones; and in the sacred disciplines they will follow the solid doctrine received from the ancestors and commonly accepted by the Church, avoiding profane novelties of words and the falsely called science” (en. 129).

As is clear, this canon cannot be applied to lay religious. Religious priests are required to take an annual examination for a five-year period, after completing their studies, on various subjects of sacred doctrine, which are to be determined in advance (cn. 590). They are also obliged to attend the solution of a moral and liturgical case that is to be celebrated in every formed house at least once a month (cn. 591). Religious with the care of souls (parish priests, etc.) must also attend conferences or meetings on morals and liturgy convoked by the bishop for secular priests or send in writing the solution of cases (can. 131.3). 5.a

Celibacy and chastity

Clerics ordained in sacris cannot marry and are obliged to keep perfect chastity, so that if they sin against it, they commit sacrilege. Those ordained as minors can contract marriage; but, by the same fact, they cease to belong to the

clerical state (en. 132). As a safeguard of chastity they are forbidden to have in their

company or frequent dealings with women about whom suspicion may fall (en. 133). The impediment of marriage and the obligation of chastity are for the religious by the vow of chastity. The enclosure regulates for the religious the dealings with persons of different sexes. 6.a

Common life

The common life, advised to clerics (en. 134), is a fundamental law for religious (en. 487), as we have already seen in giving the very notion of the religious state. 7.a

Recitation of the divine office

The recitation of the divine office, according to the proper and approved liturgical books, is an obligation proper to clerics ordained as majors (en. 135). The same is obligatory for religious ordained as majors and solemnly professed, with the exception of the laity (can. 610). The obligation for other religious depends on what their own constitutions ordain. 8.a

Ecclesiastical or religious habit

“All clerics are to wear decent ecclesiastical dress, according to the customs accepted in the country and the prescriptions of the local ordinary; they are to wear the tonsure or clerical crown, if the current customs of the country do not advise otherwise, and their hair is to be arranged with simplicity)). (cn. 136 §1).

Regarding religious, the Code prescribes the following: “All religious must wear the habit proper to their religion, both inside and outside the house, unless excused by a grave cause, in the judgment of the major superior or, if the need is urgent, by the local superior” (cn. 596).

The obligation to wear the tonsure or crown is proper to clerics. The simple arrangement of hair also affects non-clerical religious. As for the ring, it is expressly forbidden to clerics, unless it is granted by law or apostolic privilege (in. 136 § 2). This also obliges religious, who, by general custom, must abstain from wearing it, even if they are doctors, even though the Code authorizes doctors to wear the doctoral ring and biretta outside of sacred functions (en. 1378). In women’s institutes it is customary to wear a ring, at least since perpetual profession, as a symbol of the mystical betrothal to Christ. The custom is tolerable and even praiseworthy, although perhaps it would be better if such a ring were not of gold or silver, but of another metal more in keeping with evangelical poverty. However, let them abide by what their own constitutions ordain,

CA. Obligations of the religious

2.

Negative obligations

49. In addition to the positive obligations just enumerated, the Code indicates other negative obligations common to clerics and religious. The obligation to avoid those things that are considered unseemly or simply foreign to the clerical state applies equally to religious. As a general criterion the following can be established: those things that are forbidden because they are opposed to the dignity and decorum of the state, oblige with more reason the clerics,

because of the greater dignity of the priesthood; those others that are forbidden rather as an impediment to perfection (e.g., because of the danger of distraction, because they are opposed to humility or poverty, etc.), oblige with more reason the religious, because of the nature of their state of perfection 3. 1. 1.a

Do not become a guarantor in financial matters

“It is forbidden for clerics to go out as sureties, even with their own goods, without consulting the local ordinary” (en. 13 7).

The bond is a contract by which one is obliged to pay or perform for a third party in the event that the latter does not do so. If the cleric were to commit himself to such a guarantee, he would endanger either ecclesiastical goods (the alienation of which is severely forbidden to him in canons 1530 and following) or his own patrimony, with the risk of being reduced to a miserable condition that would be a disgrace to his clerical dignity. But he is allowed to become a surety with the permission of his ordinary, so as not to prejudge some particular case in which it would be convenient to do so. It is already understood that a particular religious is absolutely forbidden to become a surety under any pretext, since, by virtue of his vow of poverty, he does not even have his own goods of which he can freely make use. 2.a

To abstain from things that are disdainful of their state or may produce scandal

“Clerics must abstain absolutely from all those things that are disdainful of their state: they are not to exercise unseemly professions; they are not to indulge in games of chance in which money is at stake; they are not to carry

arms, if there is no good reason to fear; they are not to indulge in hunting and never practice clamorous hunting; they are not to enter taverns or other similar places without necessity or other just cause approved by the local ordinary" (cn. 138). "They shall not attend shows, dances and feasts that disdain their condition, nor those in which the presence of clerics can produce scandal, especially in public theaters" (cn. 140). 3 Cf. Tabera, o.c. 0.269.

F.L Canonical aspect of religious life

All these things oblige religious even more than clerics, since they are more disdainful of their religious condition and the Christian people would experience greater scandal with any of these things if they saw them practiced by a religious. It is up to the ordinaries to determine concretely in which of these spectacles: theaters, cinemas, bullfights, dances, profane meetings, banquets, taverns, bars, etc., the lack of decorum and scandal can occur; and they can prohibit attendance to those they judge opportune, even with canonical penalties (e.g., suspension a divinis) that also affect the religious. The latter, moreover, must abide by the norms of their superiors, which will ordinarily be more rigorous, in keeping with the greater perfection and austerity of their state. 3.a

Abstain from things foreign to the clerical state.

"§ x. They are also to avoid those things which, although not unseemly, are foreign to the clerical state. § 2. Let them not practice medicine or surgery without apostolic indult; let them not act as scribes or notaries except in the ecclesiastical curia; let them not admit public offices which involve the exercise of lay jurisdiction or administration. § 3. Without the license of the ordinary they are not to administer goods belonging to the laity, nor are they to

exercise offices or positions that involve the obligation to render accounts, nor are they to be procurators or advocates, except in the ecclesiastical or civil tribunal, when it is a question of their own cause or that of their church. In a criminal lay trial in which it is a matter of applying a grave personal penalty, they are not to take part in it and, without necessity, they are not even to act as witnesses. § They are not to seek the office of senators or parliamentary speakers, commonly called deputies, nor accept it without the permission of the Holy See in those regions where there is pontifical prohibition, nor attempt the same in other regions without the permission both of their ordinary and of the ordinary of the place where the election is to be held" (can. 139).

All this has perfect application to religious, and some things with greater reason. The necessity of practicing medicine for lack of doctors is sufficient cause to obtain apostolic indult, especially in mission lands; but to practice medicine in a habitual way it is necessary to ask for the indult, which cannot be presumed without more. 4.a

Not enlisting voluntarily in the military

"They are not to enlist voluntarily in the secular militia, unless they do so with the consent of their ordinary in order to be freed more quickly; nor in any way take part in civil wars or in disturbances of public order" (cn. 141 § 1).

In Spain, fortunately, this is not the case, since, by virtue of Article 15 of the current Concordat with the Holy See, dated 27th of

August 1953, “clerics and religious, whether professed or novices, are exempt from military service, according to canons 121 and 614 of the Code of Canon Law”. 5,a

Not to engage in trading or commerce

“Clerics are forbidden to engage in trade or commerce for themselves or for others, whether for their own profit or for the profit of others” (en. 142).

This prohibition has again been sanctioned and notably aggravated by decree of the Sacred Congregation of the Council of March 22, 1950 4, by imposing on transgressors the penalty of excommunication latae sententiae, reserved es^ pecially to the Holy See, This excommunication affects clerics and all religious of the Latin rite, This excommunication affects clerics and all religious of the Latin rite, without excluding members of secular institutes, who, by themselves or through others, exercise commerce or negotiation of any kind, including currency or coins, whether they do so for their own benefit or for the benefit of others, in violation of what is prescribed in canon 142; In the most serious cases, they are to be demoted. Superiors who, in the fulfillment of their office and according to their faculties, do not prevent these offenses, are to be removed from office and declared unfit for any other office of government or administration. Finally, all those to whom these crimes are imputable by fraud or negligence are obliged to repair the damages caused. However, it must be kept in mind that not every negotiation violates canon 142 and is subject to these penalties, but only the so-called lucrative (that is, that which acquires merchandise in order to sell it later at a higher price without having processed or improved it in any way), the strictly industrial (that is, that which buys merchandise and transforms or manufactures it by means of salaried workers) and the so-called political, since it is outside the

ecclesiastical state (cf. canon 139 § 1). But clerics and religious are not forbidden to engage in so-called domestic negotiation (e.g., selling at a higher price the surplus of what was acquired for the family), nor industrial negotiation, when the goods proper to the cleric or religious are processed or the merchandise is transformed by the decent work of the clerics or religious themselves. Nor is it forbidden to negotiate by means of bonds and shares, provided that, in the case of shares, the cleric does not assume the office of administrator nor negotiate with the same shares (e.g., by selling them more expensively), and provided, of course, that it is an honest society. It is also required that the purchase of these shares be made with his own money; because if it were with money acquired on loan, whose restitution and interest would have to be made with the profits received as dividends of the shares, there would be a manifest prohibited negotiation. It would be of the same nature, and therefore forbidden to clerics and religious, to acquire a debt for 4 Cf. A AS 42 (1950) 330-331.

to build a house and then to pay the debt and the interests with the fruit of the rent of the house. Many other problems raised by the casuistry of negotiation or trade can be seen in the authors who deal expressly with it 5.

Article z

OBLIGATIONS PROPER TO THE RELIGIOUS STATE In addition to the obligations common to clerics which we have just mentioned in the preceding article, the Canon Code points out to religious some others which arise from the very nature of the religious state. Fundamental principle. First of all, the

Code establishes the following fundamental principle: “Each and every religious, both superiors and subjects, must not only fulfill faithfully and integrally the vows they have made, but also order their lives in conformity with the rules and constitutions of their own religion, and thus tend to the perfection of their state” (cn. 593).

According to this canon, the principal obligations that arise from the nature of the religious state are three: 1) The integral and faithful observance of the vows, 2) The fulfillment of the rules and constitutions, 3) The unceasing tendency towards the perfection of their state, that is, towards full Christian perfection. 3) The unceasing tendency towards the perfection of their state, that is, towards full Christian perfection,

In examining the theological and ascetical-mystical aspects of the religious life in the second and third parts of our work, we will expound at length these three fundamental obligations of the religious. Apart from these three fundamental obligations, the Canon Code points out the following, all of which are proper to religious life: i.a 50.

Common life

Canon 594 establishes the following:

“In all religions the common life is to be diligently observed by all, even in those things pertaining to food, clothing, and furnishings. 5 The following studies, among others, can be consulted: Alonso Lobo, in Comentarios ai Código de Derecho canónico vol.iA ed. (BAO, Madrid 1963) P-425-432; Tabera, o.c. n.270; García Molano, Nuevas peños a clérigos y religiosos negociantes: Revista Española de Derecho Canónico 5 {1950) 1079-iroo; O. Robleda, La negociación prohibida...: Sal Terrae 40 (1952) 47S-88 and 575-81.

CA> Obligations of the religious

§ Everything acquired by religious, including superiors, in accordance with canon 580, § 2 and canon 582,1,°, is to be incorporated into the goods of the house, province, or religion, and any money and all titles are to be deposited in the common treasury. § 3. The clothing of the religious is to be in keeping with the poverty they have professed.

The common life that this canon deals with does not refer to the obligation to live in community under the same roof, but to that related to the vow of poverty. In virtue of this common life, the so-called peculium is strictly forbidden, and we will speak briefly about it below h a)

The peculium

a) Notion: By peculium is understood a certain amount, ordinarily of money, that is granted to the religious for his own uses, apart from what the present and normal necessity demands. There is no proper peculium, e.g., in the small amount that is given from time to time to religious for streetcar expenses, etc., in the city where they live, in order to avoid the inconvenience of a request in each case. It is a morally present and continuous necessity. Neither does the permission to use for a determined purpose (e.g., to buy certain books, to help the poor or relatives, etc.), the fruit of some personal work of the religious, imply a peculium. b) Types. The peculium is called perfect when it is held and administered independently of the superior, who cannot revoke or restrict it. The perfect peculium is manifestly contrary to the vow of poverty, both solemn and simple, since it consists in the independent use of material things and involves the exercise of true acts of property. It also goes directly against the precept of common life and is, therefore, always illicit and sinful, according to all authors.

As for the imperfect peculium) there is not the same uniformity of opinion. It can be affirmed with certainty: i.° That it does not go directly against the vow, since the independent use is lacking.

1 Cf.

Tabcra, o.c. n.292.

2.0 That it is, however, contrary to the perfection of the common life and, therefore, contrary to the spirit and desire of the Church. 3.0 That it is extremely pernicious to religious life, because of the inconveniences and dangers of relaxation which it brings with it; so that it can be said that the superior sins gravely who by his negligence allows the custom of the peculium to be introduced or who, being able to uproot it, does not try to do so. From this can also be deduced the responsibility of the individuals who are the cause of its introduction. b)

Other abuses

Apart from the peculium, there can be other abuses against the strict obligation of the common life. Such are singularities, exceptions, dispensations, etc., especially if they are permanent. The truly needy religious should try to use them with true caution and with complete subjection to superiors, without condescending to imaginary needs or vain pretexts that often hide the spirit of independence and comfort. Superiors should proceed with exquisite prudence in order, on the one hand, not to deny when there is real need, and on the other hand, not to allow that, by force of unnecessary concessions, the equality of exterior life, which, informed by the evangelical spirit of abnegation and charity, is one of the most beautiful ornaments of the religious state,

suffers damage 2. Perfect common life is more strictly required in houses of formation for religious; otherwise, students cannot be promoted to Holy Orders (can. 587.2). Religious who violate in a notable matter the common life prescribed in the constitutions are to be severely reprimanded; and if they do not mend their ways, they are also to be punished by deprivation of active and passive voice, and, if they are superiors, also by deprivation of office (en.2389).

2.a

51.

Exercises of piety

Canon 595 indicates exhaustively the following:

“§ r.

Superiors should see to it that all religious:

1o Let them make spiritual exercises every year. 2.0 Let those who are not legitimately impeded say Mass every day, have mental prayer, and diligently practice the other pious acts prescribed by their rules and constitutions. 3.0 They are to go to confession at least once a week. § 2. Superiors are to promote frequent, even daily, communion among their subjects; and religious who are properly disposed are to be given liberty to go frequently, even daily, to receive the Holy Eucharist. § 3. But if, after the last sacramental confession, any religious should give a grave scandal to the community or commit some grave offense

Cf.

Table,

o.c.

n.291.

CÁ. Obligations of the religious

The superior can forbid him to go to communion until he has gone to confession again. § If there is any solemnly or simply vowed religion in whose rules or constitutions, or even in its calendars, communion is appointed or prescribed on certain days, such norms have a purely directive value.

Since superiors have the right and duty to inquire about the observance of weekly confession, which is so important for the spiritual life of the religious, the subjects are obliged to give an account of their observance when questioned by superiors, without being able to answer falsely or evasively. It is clear that superiors should proceed with the utmost discretion and caution, but without abdicating their right, which is also a sacred duty. The warning in the fourth paragraph is intended to guarantee absolute freedom to approach the reception of Holy Communion, even on those days expressly indicated by the constitutions or calendar of the religious institute'. The Church is most anxious to maintain absolute freedom in the reception of the Eucharist, in order to avoid the innumerable sacrileges which would otherwise follow, especially in schools and other centers where people live in community. The Sacred Congregation of the Sacraments, on December 8, 1938, issued an Instruction reserved to bishops and major religious superiors, indicating the norms to which seminaries, colleges and religious communities must conform. According to it, the superior should limit himself to recommending frequent and daily communion, but should avoid in speech and manner of proceeding anything that could coerce the subject, exposing him to sacrilegious communion. On the contrary, he must

clearly point out that, although he is generally glad that they frequently approach the sacred table, he sees nothing reprehensible in those who do not do so, but rather a sign of freedom and of a timorous and delicate conscience. And let him not deny in deed what he affirms in word, nor make any demonstration whereby it might appear that he looks at those who frequently approach communion in order to distinguish them in preference to the others. He must not show surprise because the subject leaves communion, nor ask him or investigate the cause. In addition to this freedom, the superior, in order to avoid danger, should facilitate confession as much as possible, so that the subjects may, if they wish, go to confession daily. In boys' and girls' schools, a general communion is never to be announced, unless it is explained in the sense that all are invited without obliging anyone. In approaching the Holy Table, everything that could create difficulties for those who wish to abstain from Communion, but at the same time wish to do so in a way that could go unnoticed, is to be avoided; therefore, one is to avoid approaching in strict order, wearing a badge or medal, *etc.* The superior or chaplain of a community should also be careful not to bring communion to the sick who do not expressly ask for it, day by day.

P.I. Canonical aspect of religious life

3.a

Religious habit

52. "All religious should wear the habit proper to their religion, both inside and outside the house, unless excused by a grave cause, in the judgment of the major superior, or, if the need is urgent, by the local superior" (n. 596).

Note that the canon does not authorize superiors to dispense, but only to declare when there is grave cause to excuse from the obligation that all religious have to wear their habit in and out of the house. Apart from the prohibition of civil law, a grave cause can be considered a time of revolt or religious persecution, 4.

Religious closure

53. The following is a brief summary of the extensive ecclesiastical legislation on religious enclosure. 1. Notion. The word enclosure can be used in a material sense or in a formal sense: a) Materially considered, it designates the space within religious houses that is destined for the habitation and other uses of the religious, so that outsiders are not permitted to enter. b) Formally considered, it is the law that, without due permission, prohibits the religious from leaving the house (active enclosure) and outsiders from entering it (passive enclosure).

2.

Division.

There are two types of closure;

a) Papal closure. It is proper to regulars, that is, to religious orders of men or women who make solemn vows (cn.597 § 1). Its passive violation, on the part of any outsider, or active violation, on the part of the nuns who unduly leave the enclosure, is sanctioned by the Church with the penalty of excommunication specially reserved to the Holy See (cn.2342). The major enclosure is the one that affects the enclosure of a monastery in which solemn vows are in fact emitted and purely contemplative life is professed without any external apostolate. The minor papal enclosure is the proper one of monasteries of contemplative life in which a

considerable number of nuns, without ceasing to be such, also take care of some ministry with strangers (v.g., school of girls), for whose performance they have destined a part of the monastery with common access for nuns and educandas. b) Common (or not papal) enclosure. It is the proper one of the religious congregations, that is to say, of the religious men or women of simple vows, already be of pontifical right or of diocesan right. Its violation, although illicit, does not carry with it excommunication or any other ecclesiastical censure, although the bishop could correct the abuses with some sanction or penalty (en. 604).

C4< Obligations of religious

3. Canonical legislation. We will now collect the legislation relative to each of these different kinds of enclosure. i.

Papal closure for men or women

(a) The law. “§ i. In all canonically constituted houses of regulars, whether of men or of women, even if they are not formed, the papal enclosure is to be observed. § 2. The law of enclosure extends to the entire house inhabited by the regular community, with the orchards and gardens whose access is reserved to religious; excluding, besides the public church with the adjoining sacristy, the hospice for strangers, if there is one, and the parlor, which, as far as possible, is to be established near the door of the house. § 3. The places which fall under the law of enclosure are to be visibly indicated; but it belongs to the major superior or to the general chapter, according to the constitutions-or to the bishop, when it is a question of a monastery of nuns-to carefully indicate the limits of the enclosure or, for legitimate causes, to modify them” (en.597). b) Penalties against offenders. “They incur ipso fado excommunication simply reserved to the Apostolic See: i.° Those who break

the enclosure of the nuns, of whatever class, condition or sex they may be, entering without legitimate license in their monasteries, and likewise those who introduce or admit them; and, if they are clerics, they must, in addition, be suspended for the time determined by the ordinary, according to the gravity of the fault. 2.0 Women who break the enclosure of regular men and the superiors and others, whoever they may be, who introduce or admit them, whatever their age may be. The religious who introduce or admit them must, in addition, be deprived of their office, if they have one, and of active and passive voice. 3.0 Nuns who illegitimately leave the enclosure, contrary to what is prescribed in canon 601” (can. 2342), 2.

Papal men’s closing

a) In monasteries. “§ i. Within the enclosure of male regulars, women are not to be admitted under any pretext whatsoever, whatever their age, class or condition. § 2. Excepted from this law are the wives of those who at the time exercise the supreme leadership of the State, with the retinue that accompanies them” (cn. 598). b) In the gasses that have other works attached to them (e.g., a college, a boarding school, etc.). “If the house of the male regulars has a convent for boarding students or other works proper to religion attached to it, at least a part of the building, separated from the rest, is to be reserved for the habitation of the religious, subject to the law of enclosure, as far as possible. § 2. Without due cause and without the permission of the superior, persons of different sexes are not to be admitted even in those places outside the cloister which are set aside for external or internal students or for works proper to religion” (n. 599).

P.I, Canonical aspecio of life re ligios to 3.

Papal closure of the nuns

a) Entrance. “Without the permission of the Holy See no person of any class, condition, sex or age shall be admitted into the cloister of the nuns, with the exception of the following: i. The local ordinary or the regular superior when they visit the monastery of the nuns, or the visitators delegated by them, are permitted to enter only for the purpose of visiting the nuns’ monastery.The local ordinary or the regular superior when they visit the monastery of the nuns, or the visitators delegated by them, are permitted to enter the cloister only to inspect the premises, and taking care to be accompanied by at least one cleric or a religious of a mature age. 2.0 The confessor, or the one who takes his place, may, with due caution, enter the cloister to administer the sacraments to the sick or to assist the dying. 3.0 Those who at the time exercise the supreme leadership of the state and their wives with their entourage, and likewise the cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, may enter the cloister. 4.0 It pertains to the superior, with due caution, to permit the entry of doctors, surgeons and others whose services are necessary, having first obtained the approval, even habitual, of the local ordinary; but if the need is urgent and there is no time to ask for approval, this is presumed by right” (cn,6oo). b) Departure, “§ i. No nun is licit to leave the monastery, once she has made profession, even for a short time and under any pretext, without special indult of the Holy See, except in the case of imminent danger of death or of another very grave evil. § This danger, if time permits, must be acknowledged in writing by the local ordinary” (en.601), c) Near the enclosure, “The enclosure of the monastery of nuns must be enclosed in such a way that, if possible, neither the persons inside can be seen from the outside, nor those outside from the inside” (cn.602).

d) Vigilance. “The custody of the enclosure of the nuns, even of those subject to the regulars, is under the supervision of the local ordinary, who can correct and punish with penalties and even with censures the offenders, without exception of the regulars themselves, § 2. The custody of the enclosure of the nuns subject to the regular superior is also entrusted to the latter, who can also punish with penalties the nuns and other subjects of his if they offend in this matter” (en, 603). 4.

Minor papal closure

The Inter celerian Instruction of the Sacred Congregation for Religious of March 25, 1956 3 readjusted what pertains to the enclosure of the nuns with the modifications introduced by the constitution of Pius XII Sponsa Christi of November 21, 1950 4, by subdividing the papal enclosure of the nuns into major and minor. We cannot gather here all the de* Cf, AAS 48

(xqsó)

$12-526.

4 Cf. AAS 43 (i05Ó i6ff.).

r.° In the part of the enclosure reserved exclusively for the nuns no strange person of any class, condition, sex and age can enter, as we have seen when speaking of the greater papal enclosure. If they enter, they incur the excommunication of canon 2342. 2.0 In the other parts of the minor enclosure it is licit the entrance of the persons in whose benefit the ministries are exercised (women, school

girls or boys, etc.) and also the women who are necessary for such ministries (teachers, nurses, maids, workers). In a transitory manner, other persons may be admitted who are linked by a special bond to those in whose favor the ministries are exercised (e.g., parents, relatives or benefactors who accompany the girls or boys or who wish to visit them). In addition, the same and even others may be invited, according to the nature of the work and the customs of the place, to certain religious or secular festivities or exercises. As for the passage of the nuns from the part reserved for the community to that of the works or ministries, it must always be done directly through a special door; and the passage is only permitted at the hours legitimately designated, and to the nuns who by the superior are destined to these works or ministries, either for an act, or habitually, according to the constitutions or statutes. The superior or another nun named by her, even if it is only to exercise the suitable vigilance, must also be catalogued among the same ones. As for penalties or sanctions, the nuns who illegitimately pass from the parts of the monastery reserved for the community to the other premises situated within the enclosure of the monastery, must be punished by the superior or the local ordinary according to the gravity of the fault. Those who enter unlawfully into the monastery premises not destined exclusively for the community, and those who introduce or admit them, are to be severely punished by the local ordinary of the place where the monastery is located, according to the gravity of the fault. 5.

Common (or non-papal) closure

It is, as we said, proper to congregations or religious institutes that make simple vows (temporary or perpetual), but not solemn vows* The Code establishes the following: "§ 1* Also in the houses of religious congregations$f whether of

pontifical right or of diocesan right, enclosure is to be kept without admitting into it any person of a different sex, except those mentioned in canon 598 § 2 and in canon 600, and others whom the superiors, for just and reasonable causes, judge that they may be admitted. § 2. The prescriptions of canon 599 5 shall also apply to houses of religious congregations, whether of men or of women. § 3* The bishop can, in special circumstances and for grave reasons, reinforce this enclosure with censures, unless it is a matter of a censorship. 5 This refers to the attached colleges or boarding schools, as we have explained above.

exempt clerical religion; but he must always see to it that this enclosure is duly observed and that abuses are corrected if any are introduced" (en.604),

As we have already indicated above, the breaking of these non-papal enclosures is illicit, but does not carry with it the excommunication annexed to those who break the papal enclosure established in canon 2342. 6.

Conduct of the closing managers

"All those who are responsible for the custody of the cloister must diligently see to it that discipline is not disturbed by the visits of strangers and that the religious spirit is not damaged by useless conversations" (can. 605).

5.

Departures from home and visits

54. "Religious superiors are to see to it that what is prescribed in their own constitutions is punctually observed, both with regard to religious leaving the house and with

regard to receiving or visiting strangers. § 2. Superiors, except for the prescriptions of canons 621-624, cannot permit subjects to live outside the houses of their own religion, except for a grave and just cause and for the shortest time possible according to the constitutions; but if the absence should exceed six months, not being for reasons of studies,6 7 a license from the Apostolic See is always required” (en.606).

On July 15, 1926, the Sacred Congregation of Religious sent letters to the supreme superiors of religious orders and congregations regarding how religious who, for health reasons, go to health resorts should behave, similar to those published in the same month and year by the Sacred Congregation of the Council regarding secular clerics. In them, the Sacred Congregation of Religious inculcates: a)

That superiors should be sparing in granting such permissions. That when they grant them for just and reasonable reasons of health (not for simple recreation), they should see to it that the religious stay in a religious house, or, if this is not possible, in a house of proven honesty, suitable to their state. c) That it is absolutely forbidden to the said religious to take off their habit for any reason, or to attend theaters, cinemas, games or other spectacles of the kind, and, furthermore, that they should abstain from attending any meeting where things unbecoming of a religious are discussed. d) That the superiors should see to it that the religious fulfill these prescriptions, severely punishing those who violate them.

bj

6 7

They refer to mendicant or postulant religious for the duration of the postulation. Or for the purpose of recovering their health (e.g., in an anti-tuberculosis sanatorium), according to the response of the Sacred Congregation of Religious to the Procurator General of the Franciscans dated May 25, 1942.

C.4. Obligations of the religious

101

The Canon Code adds the following in relation to religious sisters: “Superiors and local ordinaries should exercise serious vigilance so that religious sisters do not go out of the house alone, except in case of necessity” (en,607).

6.

Cooperation in sacred ministries

Superiors should see to it that, without detriment to religious discipline, the religious subjects designated by them willingly carry out their ministry, especially in the diocese in which they reside, when the local ordinaries or pastors ask them to do so in order to attend to the needs of the people, both within and outside their own churches or public oratories. § 2. In their turn, local ordinaries and parish priests should willingly use the help of religious, especially those who live in the diocese, in the sacred ministry, and especially in the administration of the sacrament of penance” (can. 608). Canon 609 § 3 establishes that “superiors are to take care that the celebration of the divine offices in their own churches does not prejudice the catcchesis or the explanation of the Gospel which is to be made in the parish church; but to judge whether or not it is prejudicial belongs to the ordinary of the place” (can. 609).

7.

Choral office

56. It is one of the most important observances in the orders that practice it. The canonical code determines the following: “§ 1. In the case of religions of men or women who have the obligation of choir, the divine office is to be recited every day in common, according to the constitutions, in all those houses where there are at least four religious obliged to choir who are not in fact legitimately impeded, and even if there are fewer, if the constitutions so determine. § 2. Mass corresponding to the office, according to the rubrics, is to be celebrated every day in the religions of men and, if possible, also in those of women. § 3. In the same religions of both men and women, solemnly professed members who have not attended choir are to pray the canonical hours in private, with the exception of the laity” (en.610).

The obligation of the choir, in the orders that have it established, is a grave, local and real obligation, but not a personal one. This means that no individual religious is obliged sub gravi to attend, except when it is necessary so that there may be a choir. The superiors are, personally, in the same condition as the subjects; but, by reason of their office, they are obliged to see to it that the choir is properly maintained; in such a way that the choir can be properly attended by the religious.

If, through their fault, the whole office or a notable part of it should be omitted one day, or if it should not be carried out in accordance with the norms that regulate it in regard to time and other matters, they would sin gravely. The

following are legitimately impeded: a) Those who are sick. b) Those who are occupied in attending to the confessional, preaching or teaching. c) Those who are legitimately dispensed.

A contemporary canonist writes on the same subject: “Those who at choir time are occupied in attending to the confessional, preaching, teaching or preparing classes, or other similar tasks, are legitimately impeded from doing so. There is no doubt that in order to fulfill such ministries, the choir can sometimes be omitted. However, in any case, the following observations should be kept in mind: a) Religious, especially superiors, should never lose sight of the fact that, in the religions obliged to choir, this is one of the principal observances, and, therefore, they should arrange things in such a way that it is duly fulfilled and that, in a habitual manner, it is not postponed to other ministries, however praiseworthy they may be. b) When a change in the schedule of the community can provide for the recitation of the canonical hours in choir within the useful time appointed by the liturgists, such a change should be made, provided that no notable disturbance or inconvenience follows. c) The choral obligation is divisible; so that, if the legitimate impediment affects only some parts of the divine office, the others are to be recited in choir; and the failure to do so may amount to mortal sin if the part omitted constitutes grave matter”.

8*

Epistolary correspondence

57, “All religious, both men and women, may freely send letters, without it being lawful for anyone to inspect them, to the Holy See and to his legate in the nation, to the cardinal protector, to their own major superiors, to the superior of the

house when he is absent, to the ordinary of the place to whom they are subject and, in the case of nuns who are under the jurisdiction of the regulars, also to the major superiors of the order; and likewise the said religious, men or women, may receive letters from all these, without anyone being able to inspect them” (cn.óu).

As for correspondence with other persons, other than those excepted in this canon, the law neither commands nor forbids superiors to inspect it; they must, therefore, abide in each institute by what the respective constitutions provide. In any case, the superior is obliged by natural law to keep secret the news acquired by reading the letters of the subjects, and its violation” Sabino Alonso, O. P., Comentarios al Código de Derecho canónica vol.i. i.’ ed, (BAC, Madrid 1963) p.908.

If it is a matter of serious and secret matters, this could constitute a mortal sin. Nor can they inspect letters “of conscience” addressed by subjects to their confessors or spiritual directors, unless they have serious and grave grounds for suspecting that, under this label, they are dealing with things very different from their own conscience, in which case, rather than reading enough to make sure of it, as some authors admit, they should communicate the possible abuse to their ordinary (bishop or provincial, as the case may be) so that he may provide what must be done. 9*

Functions imposed by the bishop

58* “In addition to the provisions of canon 1345 10, if the local ordinary, for a public cause, orders the ringing of bells, the recitation of certain prayers, or the celebration of certain

solemnities, all religious, even those who are exempt, must obey, except for the constitutions and privileges of each religion” (en. 612).

By public cause, in the sense of this canon, is meant that which is common to the whole diocese or at least to an important part of it. Under the name of prayers are understood not only the “collects” prayed at Mass, but also the recitation of litanies, for example. Solemnities can be understood as the celebration of a solemn Mass, the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, a public procession, *etc.*

Chapter

5

PRIVILEGES OF THE RELIGIOUS A clear demonstration of the singular appreciation of the Church for religious institutes, a select part of the Mystical Body of Christ, is the accumulation of privileges with which she has enriched them through the centuries. Here we will limit ourselves to collecting the canonical legislation concerning them, with brief apostilles or comments h 10 This refers to Sunday homiletic or catechetical preaching, if the bishop ordains it in all churches. 1 We take them almost always from the notes to the Code of Canon Law 6.* bilingual edition (BAC, Madrid 1957), and from Tabera, o:c. n.320ff.

P.I. Canonical aspect of religious life

i.

Acquisition of privileges

Each religion enjoys only those privileges which are contained in this Code or which are directly granted to it by the Apostolic See, and henceforth all communication is excluded. § The privileges enjoyed by a regular order also pertain to the nuns of the same order, insofar as they are capable of them” (cn. 613).

The Pontifical Commission of Interpreters declared on December 30, 1937 2 that the words “henceforth excluded all communication” are to be understood in the sense that the privileges which the religions had legitimately acquired by communication and peacefully possessed prior to the

promulgation of the Code were not revoked. Nuns of the same order are those that are governed by the same rule, or those that are considered as part of the same religious family because they have a rule adapted by the same founder, e.g., the nuns of the mendicant orders, without excepting the external sisters, according to the decree of July 16, 1931 3. 2* 2.

Clerical privileges

Religious, including laymen and novices, enjoy the clerical privileges mentioned in canons 119-1Z3" (can. 614).

These privileges are: i.° The privilege of the canon: "All the faithful owe reverence to clerics, according to their ranks and offices, and commit the crime of sacrilege if they inflict real injury to them" (canon 119). The real injury is opposed to the verbal one, and it is the one committed by deed or deeds against the integrity of the body or against the freedom or dignity of the person. 2.0 The privilege of the forum: "Clerics must be summoned before the ecclesiastical judge in all causes, both contentious and criminal, unless something else has been legitimately provided for particular places" (can. 120.1). By virtue of this privilege, the cleric or religious cannot be judged by a secular court except with the license of the ordinary of the place (cf. § z and 3).

3.0 PRIVILEGE OF EXEMPTION FROM MILITARY SERVICE: "All clerics are exempt from military service and from civil public offices and positions outside the clerical state" (canon 121).

Cf. AAS 30 (1938) 73. 3 Cf. AAS 23 (i93i) 380.

C.5, Privileges of the Religious

The principal offices and offices incompatible with or outside the clerical state are those indicated in canon 139 § 3 and 4,

namely: those that carry with them the obligation of rendering accounts, or that of procurator, lawyer (in lay or other causes), senator, deputy, *etc.*

4.0 The privilege of competence: “Clerics who are forced to pay their creditors must be left what, according to the prudent discretion of the ecclesiastical judge, is necessary for their honest sustenance, remaining firm, however, the obligation to pay their creditors as soon as possible” (en. 122). This privilege was granted by Roman law to various classes of persons, and modern civil codes usually grant it in a general form, so as not to leave anyone entirely destitute.

Canon 123 forbids the clergy-and, consequently, the religious as well-to renounce the aforementioned privileges, since they are granted by way of law, not in favor of individuals, but of the clerical or religious state, whose honor and sanctity they protect. 3,

Exemption of regulars

The privilege. The exemption is a privilege by virtue of which a person or a place is removed from the jurisdiction of the bishops and submitted immediately to the Supreme Pontiff. Canons 615-17 state it in the following way: Canon 615. “The rulers, without excluding the novices, whether male or female, excepting those nuns who are not subject to the regular superiors, are, with their houses and churches, exempt from the jurisdiction of the local ordinary, except in those cases which the law expresses”. Regulars who live illegitimately outside the convent, even under the pretext of going to their superiors, do not enjoy the privilege of exemption.

§ z. If they commit a crime outside the convent and their superior, having been previously notified, does not impose

punishment on them, the local ordinary can impose it on them, even if they have legitimately left and returned to the convent. If abuses are committed in the houses or churches of regulars or other exempt religious, and the superior, having been notified, does not apply a suitable remedy, the local ordinary is obliged immediately to bring the matter to the attention of the Apostolic See.

§ But unformed houses are under the special supervision of the local ordinary, who, if abuses are introduced to the scandal of the faithful, can himself remedy them in a provisional manner. By reason of its object, exemption is divided into local, personal and mixed, according as it directly affects places, persons or both at the same time. The exemption of the regulars, that is, of religious belonging to an order

of solemn vows (cf. can. 488,2.0 and 7.0) is mixed, but with a certain preeminence of the personal over the local, so that its houses and churches are competent by reason of persons; and it includes the regulars, not any other persons who are there, that is, the exemption of the regulars is not active but passive. Nor is it absolute, but undergoes some limitations, expressly indicated in the law, as canon 615 warns, pertaining almost all to points or aspects related to the faithful people, who are subjects of the bishop. But taking into account that exemption has the character of a general rule and limitations have the character of an exception, as long as the latter is not established with certainty, one must lean in favor of exemption 4. 63. 3. Limitations. The following are the limitations to the law of exemption established by the Code itself. a)

Exempt religious need permission from the local ordinary:

1. to erect a house or school, or to open a guest house or other house separate from the convent, or to transform a convent into something else (can. 497). To build a church or public oratory in a particular place (can. 1164, § 4). 3. Not a ciborium 4.

To expose the Blessed Sacrament publicly (except on Corpus Christi). license necessary for private exposition, i.e., with only the (in. 1274). To place an unaccustomed image in a church (in. 1279).

5. To celebrate a procession outside the convent (en. 1292). 6. To preach to the faithful or to nuns, including nuns subject to the regulars (en. 1338). 7. to exercise the ministry in vicariates and apostolic prefectures (en. 295). 8. to dispose of money received in parish or mission, or in any form, in the case of nuns (en.533). To receive fiduciary goods destined to help churches, neighbors, or pious causes of the place or diocese (en. 1516). 10. To publish books and to write in newspapers, in sheets or in periodicals or to take charge of their direction (en. 1386). What they publish they must submit to the prior censorship of the bishop, in addition to that of their own major superior (en, 1335). To publish new indulgences not promulgated in Rome (cn. 919). To erect third orders and to grant them the use of wearing the habit in public religious functions (can. 703). To erect pious associations in the same house or in the attached church (cn.686). Sabino Alonso, O. P., La exención de los religiosos (Salamanca 1938).

Cj. Privileges of the religious

14. To ask for alms, unless it is an order of the so-called mendicant orders and it is asked in the same diocese where the mendicant convent is located (en.621-22). b)

Exempt religious must be subject to the local ordinary:

1. On precedence when they join together collegially with other religious (en. 106 § 6). 2. When he orders the playing of the chimes, the recitation of certain prayers, or the celebration of certain solemnities (cruói2). 3. If he orders another distribution in worship services so as not to impede the catcquesis or parish homily (en.609). 4. On the norms for admitting strangers to the celebration of Mass (cn.804). 5. concerning the diocesan Mass stipend (cn. 831). 6. concerning the laws which he promulgates concerning the observance of common law in divine worship (en. 1261). If he orders extraordinary processions for some public cause, religious are obliged to attend (en. 1292). 8. if he requires superiors to give catechetical instruction to the people (en. 1334), or orders that the Gospel or a doctrinal point be preached at Masses on feast days (01.1345). 9. if he orders that contributions be made to the seminary, unless the religious live on alms alone or have a college of students or professors to promote the common good of the Church (en.1356; cf. can. 1535). 10. If, because of a special need of the diocese, he imposes some moderate tribute on the beneficiaries, even religious (en, 1505). If it is a question of a local interdict and the oratory or church is located in such a place, except for special privilege (cf. cn. 2269), c).

The local ordinary has the right4.

1. to grant the parochial title to those presented by the superior (cn. 456 and 471-2); to remove from the same office (^,454-5 and 471-3); of omnimal jurisdiction to visit and correct religious who govern parishes (cn. 631), and to visit and correct missionaries in that which pertains to the regime of the missions (en. 296). 2. to approve religious and confer jurisdiction on them to hear confessions (en.874 and 876). 3. to examine religious who are to be parish priests

(cn. 459 and 471), or confessors (en.877), or preachers (en. 1340). 4. To approve the confessors of nuns presented by the superior, or to remove them from office for grave cause (en.525 and 527). 5. to demand annually from the monasteries of nuns an account of the administration (en.535). 6. To examine the will of aspirants to the religious habit or to temporary or perpetual profession (en.552). 7* To watch over the custody of the cloister of the nuns (en.603) and to make the canonical visitation every five years (cn.5i2). To confer orders on religious belonging to his diocese (cn.965) and to receive ordinands after examination (en.997).

9. To receive the profession of faith and the anti-modernist oath to ordinands, confessors and preachers (en. 1406). To exercise the office of pontifical, to administer confirmation and to preach in the churches of religious (cn. 337, 792 and 1343). ir. To consecrate oratories, bells and non-portable altars destined for religious (en. 1155-1169). 12. To visit schools, colleges, etc., concerning religious and moral formation (en. 1382). 13. to institute proceedings against religious in cases concerning the Holy Office (cn. 501 and 1555). 14. To settle controversies between physical or moral religious persons of different religions or between religious and priests or laity (en. 1579). Regarding religions of simple vows, the Canon Code establishes the following: “§ 1. Religions of simple vows do not enjoy the privilege of exemption, except by special concession.5 § 2. § 2. In religions of pontifical right, however, the local ordinary cannot: i.° Change anything in the constitutions or intervene in financial matters, except as provided in canons 533-535. 2º To interfere in the internal government and discipline, with the exception of the cases specified in the law. In lay religions, however, it can and should investigate

whether discipline is observed according to the requirements of the constitutions, whether sound doctrine or good morals have suffered any breach, whether enclosure has been broken, whether the sacraments are received with due frequency and at the appointed times; And if the superiors, being aware that there are such grave abuses, do not apply the opportune remedies, the local ordinary will provide; but if something of special gravity occurs which does not admit of delay, he will resolve it immediately, sending immediately to the Holy See the resolution adopted" (cn.618).

Coercive power of the local ordinary over religious: "In all those things in which religious are subject to the local ordinary, the latter can also impose penalties on them" (can. 619).

4.

Pardons granted by the local ordinary

64. "Thanks to the indult legitimately granted by the local ordinary, the obligation of the common law ceases also for all religious who live in the diocese, except for the vows and constitutions proper to each religion" (can. 620).

This means that when the ordinaries of the place dispense, e.g., fasting and abstinence for a special cause of 5 Passionists, Redemptorists, Solasemos and some others enjoy exemption by virtue of special privilege. Likewise, the Paulines and the Daughters of Charity enjoy it, although they are not congregations, but societies of common life without public vows.

C.5' Privileges of the Religious

In the case of a great concourse of the people or of public health, religious, even those who are exempt, can make use of such a concession, provided that their vows or constitutions do not oppose it or that their superiors do not judge the use of such a dispensation to be convenient. As far as the constitutions are concerned, it can happen that they limit themselves to reproducing what is established by ecclesiastical law, without attempting to add any new obligation to it. In such a hypothesis, because the ecclesiastical law ceases to be binding by virtue of the dispensation of the local ordinary, the constitutions also cease to be binding; and even if the latter does not happen, in any case, their nonobservance, as long as the dispensation lasts, exempts from sin against the ecclesiastical law. 5.

Alms collection

65. The Code devotes four canons to this collection, in which the following is determined: Canon 621. "§ 1. Regulars who by their institute are called mendicants and are so called 6 may, without other license than that of their superiors, beg alms in the diocese where their convent is located; but in other dioceses they need, in addition, license, given in writing, from the ordinary of the place where they wish to collect alms. § 2. Ordinaries, especially those of neighboring dioceses, are not to refuse this permission or revoke it, except for grave and urgent causes, if the convent absolutely cannot live on the alms of the diocese in which it is located".

As an excellent canonist observes, taking up the common doctrine7 , the following conditions are required for the collection referred to in this canon: a) That the request be made personally by the religious. b) That it be made, in general, to the faithful without distinction of persons, not

being included, therefore, in this prohibition of the canon to ask for alms for a determined work or need by means of circular letters or announcements and to determined persons known for their piety and generosity. c) From door to door, asking for the alms of the faithful. 6 That is to say, the Franciscans Minor and the Capuchins, who, as we said above, were excluded from the concession made by the Tridentine Council to the other mendicant orders, are not included in this prohibition. The other orders bearing that name, such as the Dominicans, Carmelites, Augustinians, etc., cannot therefore be considered mendicants for the purposes of this petition for alms, as the Commission of Interpreters declared on October 16, 1919 (cf. A AS ir [1919] 478). However, some ancient mendicant orders, the Congregation of Passionists and some others enjoy this right to beg alms by virtue of special privileges granted to them. Cf. Tabera, o.c, n-327-.......

The acceptance of alms made spontaneously and voluntarily, nor the formation of lists of benefactors or collaborators who commit themselves to give periodically a certain amount in favor of the works of religion, to be collected by the religious at the respective domiciles of the donors. All other religious of congregations of pontifical right are forbidden to beg for alms unless they have a special privilege from the Holy See; and those who have obtained such a privilege, unless it provides otherwise, require in addition a written permission from the local ordinary. § 2. Religious belonging to congregations of diocesan right cannot ask for alms without the written permission of the ordinary of the place where their house is situated and of that in whose diocese they wish to collect alms. §3. Religious

mentioned in paragraphs 1 and 2 of this canon are not to be granted permission by local ordinaries to beg alms, especially where there are convents of regulars who are mendicants in name and in reality, unless they are satisfied that the house or pious work is in real need which cannot otherwise be remedied; and if such need can be alleviated by begging alms within the place, district, or diocese where those religious live, they are not to grant them further permission. § Without an authentic and recent rescript of the Sacred Congregation for the Eastern Church, Latin ordinaries must not permit any Easterner of whatever order or dignity to collect money in their territory, nor send any of their own subjects to Eastern dioceses for the same purpose". Canon 623. "It is not licit for superiors to entrust postulation except to professed members of mature age and good spirit, especially women, and never to those who have not yet completed their studies. Canon 624. "But in regard to the manner of begging and the discipline to be observed by those in charge of almsgiving, religious of both sexes must abide by the instructions given by the Apostolic See on this matter.

The instructions given by the Apostolic See on this matter are contained in the decree Singulari, of the S. C. of Bishops and Regulars, dated March 27, 1896. C. of Bishops and Regulars, of March 27, 1896, and in that of the S. C. of Religious De eleemosynis, of November 21, 1908. C. of Religious De eleemosynis, of November 21, 1908. The first refers to nuns, and the second to religious. The first one orders that the superiors should never send a single religious, but that they should go two by two; and when they make the postulation in their own diocese, they should not spend more than one month outside the religious house, nor more than two months when they do it in other dioceses. While they are away, they are to avoid useless conversations, familiarity with men and walking in

inconvenient places; if possible, travel by train; do not walk at night and try to stay in some institute of pious women or in the house of an honest woman, *etc.* The one concerning men orders that, except in case of grave necessity,

the religious should go in pairs to the postulation, especially in places where they do not have a convent; in these places they should stay in parish houses or in those of other secular clerics or religious, and, in the absence of these, in the house of some pious benefactor, *etc.*

Appendix: Transition to Another Religion 66* The Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas, expressly raises in the Summa Theologica the question of whether one can licitly pass from one religious order to another; and he answers that, although it is not praiseworthy, generally speaking, there could be some reasons that would make it necessary or useful. Here are his own words 8: “It is not praiseworthy to pass from one religious order to another, except in case of great utility or necessity. The reason is that, generally, it serves as a scandal for those who persevere in the previous one, and, moreover, in the same circumstances, it is easier to profit in an order to which one is already accustomed than in a new one. Abbot Nesteros 9 says: “It is useful for each one to persevere in the purpose he has chosen, and with great application and diligence to try to bring to perfection the work he has undertaken, and never to abandon the profession he has embraced. And he gives the reason: “It is impossible for the same man to excel in all the virtues. If he tries to do so, he will necessarily attain none of them with perfection, because he has wanted to attain them all”. Now, every order excels in the acts of some virtue. However, there can be three cases in which it is praiseworthy to pass from one order to another: First, when it is because of the desire

for a more perfect life, which, as we have already said, is not measured only by austerity, but principally by the end to which it is ordered, and secondarily by the perfect adaptation of the observances to the end I0. Second, in case of relaxation of the order itself. And so, when in a more perfect order the religious begin to live in a relaxed way, it will be praiseworthy to pass to another order even less perfect, but in exact regular observance. This is what Abbot John says of himself, who had professed the life of a hermit, but passed to a less perfect life, that is, to the life of community, because the life of a hermit had begun to decline and to be mediocrely observed U. Thirdly, in case of illness or delicate health, which prevents the observance of the rule of a more austere order, being able to fulfill the observance of a more gentle order".

So much for the Angelic Doctor. For its part, the Canonical Code establishes the following norms for the transit from one religious order to another: Canon 632. "The religious cannot pass to another religion, even if it is narrower, nor from one autonomous monastery to another, without the authorization of the Apostolic See. " 2*2,189,8. 9 Cf. Cassian, Collation 14 c.5: ML 49.959. Cf. 2-2,188,6. n Cf. Cassian, Collation 19 c.3 and 5: ML 49,1129 and 1131.

He who passes to another religion must make novitiate 12, during which, while the vows remain in force, the particular rights and obligations which he had in the former religion are suspended, and he is obliged to obey, even by virtue of the vow of obedience, the superiors, and also the master of novices of the new religion,

§2. If he fails to make profession in the religion to which he has transferred, he must return to his former religion, unless

the term of vows has expired in the meantime. Canon 634. “He who has solemnly professed or who has made profession of simple perpetual vows, if he passes to another religion of solemn or simple perpetual vows, after the novitiate, omitting the temporary profession of which canon 574 speaks, must be admitted to solemn profession or simple perpetual profession *3, or return to the former religion; but the superior has the right to try it longer, provided that it does not exceed one year after the conclusion of the novitiate”. Canon 635. “Those who pass to another monastery of the same religion, from the day of transit, and those who pass to another religion, from the time they profess; in it:

i.° They lose all the rights and are freed from all the obligations which they had in the former religion or monastery, and acquire the rights and obligations of the new religion or monastery. 2.0 The religion or monastery from which they left retains the goods which by reason of the same religious they had already acquired; as for the dowry and its fruits and other personal goods, if the religious had some, what is prescribed in canon 551, § 2 I4 is to be observed; finally, the new religion has the right during the time of novitiate to a just retribution, if there is room for it according to the norm of canon 570, § 1.” 1S, Canon 636. “The solemnity of vows in one who legitimately, according to the preceding canons, makes simple vows in a religious congregation, is extinguished by the very fact of the new profession, provided that the apostolic indult does not expressly determine otherwise.” 12 Wearing the habit of the new religion, not that of the former one (S. C. of Religious, May 14, 1923: AAS 15 [1923] 289). 13 Prior deliberative vote (not only consultative) of the chapter of the new order, as declared by the Interpreting Commission on July 14, 1922 (AAS 14 [1922I 528). 14 Canon SSl § 2 oidens that, during the novitiate, the /ruffs of the dowry be given to the new

religion; and after profession, also the dowry. 1 s Canon 570 § 1 says that (nothing can be required for the expenses of the postulancy or novitiate, unless the constitutions or an express agreement made at the beginning of the postulancy or novitiate authorize the collection of the amount of food and the religious habit.

Part Two THE THEOLOGICAL ASPECT OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

After having studied the canonical aspect of religious life, we will now approach the study of its principal theological aspects. This will constitute the second part of our work, reserving for the third part the detailed examination of the spirituality of religious life, that is, its ascetical-mystical aspect in order to achieve the full sanctification of the religious. We will divide this second part into five chapters: 1) The states of perfection. 2. Nature of the religious state. 3. 3.0 Religious vocation. 4.0 Religious vows in general. 5. 5.0 Religious profession.

Chapter

i

THE STATES OF PERFECTION Religious life-as we will explain in detail below-constitutes a state of perfection in the theological and canonical sense of the word. It is necessary, therefore, to examine first of all the intimate nature of the states of perfection, pointing out their essential elements and their accidental modalities. i.

The

state

in general

67. a) In a broad sense, state is understood as any constant and stable condition or form of life. Thus theologians speak of the state of pure nature (which would be that of the human race if God had not raised it to the supernatural order), of the state of innocence (that of Adam and Eve in Paradise, before original sin), of fallen nature (that of humanity after Adam's sin), of repaired nature (that of humanity redeemed by Christ), of the beatific state (that of the angels and the blessed in heaven), of the state of damnation (proper to the demons and the damned in hell), and so on.

For the condition or form of life to constitute a true state, a certain stability is required; an absolute stability when the state is in itself immutable, as in the matrimonial, priestly or religious state, or, at least, a relative stability when the change of life is possible, although difficult, as in the celibate state, the secular state or the state of slavery. b) In a stricter sense, a state is understood as a stable condition of life that comes from an obligation or from an absence of obligation. In this sense we distinguish the state of the free man from the state of the slave, the state of marriage from the celibate state, the clerical state from the secular state, the regular state from the secular state, *etc.* What characterizes the state of life, in this strict sense, is that the cause of this state must be not only a permanent cause, but also an obligation or absence of obligation" For example, the conjugal state consists essentially of the permanent obligations that come from marriage, obligations from which the celibate is exempt. The clerical state and the religious state are constituted by a series of special obligations that do not affect the laity or seculars. Two, then, are the essential conditions required for a state of life in the strict sense: stability or permanence and a bond or obligation that induces immobility in the mind of man and in his way of living. This bond, in relation to the state of perfection, must be moral (e.g., by means of vows), not physical, which is proper to slaves or prisoners, because the nature of the subject (man), the nature of the end to be attained (perfect charity) and the nature of the means to be employed (works of counsel) demand it.

From these simple notions it is clear that state or way of life is not the same as profession or trade. The profession of doctor, lawyer, worker, etc., does not come from a habitual obligation that affects the person who exercises it, but rather to the occupations or activities that he carries out.

The profession can be changed repeatedly while the same state of life remains intact. 2*

Diversity of states in the Church

68 St. Thomas beautifully proves that it is very convenient that there should be in the Church a diversity of states and offices for the perfection of the Church herself, to better attend to her different needs and for her greater dignity and beauty. Here are his own words h 1 2-2,183,2.

C.I. The states of perfection

For three reasons different states and offices are necessary in the Church: a) For the perfection of the Church herself. Just as in the natural order the perfection that is found in God in a simple and uniform way cannot be realized in creatures except in a varied and multiform way, so also the fullness of grace, which is unified in Christ as the Head, is distributed diversely in its members so that the body of the Church may be perfect. Therefore the Apostle says: “He has appointed some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints” (Eph 4:11-12). b) To better meet the various needs of the Church. For it is necessary that different persons be employed for different actions, if everything is to go well and without confusion. Therefore the Apostle says: “Just as in one body we have many members and all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ” (Rom 12:4-5). c) For the dignity and beauty of the Church, which consists in order. This is why we read in the book of Kings: “When the queen of Sheba saw the wisdom of Solomon, the rooms of his servants and the order of his offices, she was beside herself” (3 Kings 10:4-5). And St. Paul writes: “In a great house there are not only

vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay" (2 Tim 2:20).

In the solution of the difficulties, St. Thomas rounds out this doctrine with some splendid observations: 1. a The diversity of offices and states does not impede the unity of the Church, which proceeds from the unity of faith, charity and mutual help. Thus St. Paul says: "Through Christ the whole body is held together (through faith) and united (through charity) by the various organs which unite and nourish it" (Eph 4:16), that is, by mutual service. 2. a Just as nature does not use many means when one is sufficient, so it does not limit itself to one when many are necessary. That is why St. Paul says: "If the whole body were an eye, where would be the ear? (1 Cor 12:17). Therefore, in the Church, "which is the body of Christ" (Eph 1:23), it was necessary to diversify the members according to different offices, states and degrees. 3. a Just as in the physical body the different members are unified by the action of the Spirit who vivifies them, failing which they are separated from the body, so also in the body of the Church harmony is maintained among the different members by the action of the Holy Spirit, who vivifies the body of the Church, as we read in St. John (Io 6:64). This is why St. Paul says: "Be diligent to keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace" (Eph 4:3). When anyone seeks his own good, he separates himself from this unity of the Spirit, just as peace in a city would be destroyed if every citizen were concerned only with his own. On the other hand, the distinction of offices and states favors not only spiritual peace, but also social peace, since it obliges a greater number of men to devote themselves to public works. This is why the Apostle says: "God so ordered the body that there should be no divisions, but that all the members should be concerned for one another" (1 Cor. 1:24-25).

3.

States of perfection

69* Applying the notions we have given above in relation to the states of life, it is easy to give a definition of the states of perfection in general: They are those states of Christian life whose members bind themselves in a permanent and stable way, by certain means, to acquire Christian perfection or to exercise it for the good of others.

According to this, the fundamental elements that make up the state of perfection are two: stability and the obligation to tend to Christian perfection, if it is a state to acquire it, such as the religious state, or to exercise it for the good of others, if it is the episcopal state, as we will specify below. a) Stability must be, at least, intentional; that is, there must exist in the will the intention to remain in the state of perfection for the whole of one's life. Therefore, it must be born of a cause that is permanent or very difficult to change, which is the vow, oath or promise made in complete freedom. This is what constitutes the formal and specific element that distinguishes the state of perfection from other states of life. Let us listen to the Angelic Doctor: "The perfection that proceeds from a vow changes the condition and the state, just as freedom and servitude constitute two different states of life. For when someone vows to keep perfect confinement, he loses the freedom to take a wife; while he who keeps continence without a vow does not lose that freedom. Therefore, his condition or state does not change, as does that of the one who vows continence. But it must be kept in mind that one can lose one's freedom in a total or only partial way. For if a man binds himself before God or before men to do something special and for a certain

time, he does not lose his freedom totally, but only in that thing and for that time to which he has bound himself. But if he submits himself totally to the authority of anyone, so that he retains nothing of his own freedom, he has totally changed his condition, becoming the slave of his master. Thus, if someone offers to God a vow to do a particular thing (e.g., a pilgrimage, fasting, etc.), he does not thereby change his condition or state. But if he binds himself by vow to dedicate his whole life to the acquisition of Christian perfection, he has totally changed his condition and has thereby entered a state of perfection,

Note, however, that “Christian perfection” is not the same as “state of perfection”. The former consists essentially in the perfection of charity 3 and so it is and can be called 2 Cf. De perfectione vitae spiritualis c.15. 3 See our Thealogy of Christian Perfection 4.” ed. (BAC, Madrid 1962) n.109*117” where we have explained at length this very important question.

C.l, The states of perfection

Anyone who has attained perfection in the love of God and neighbor, whether or not he is in an official state of perfection, is perfect. For there to be a “state of perfection,” on the other hand, it is essentially required to have embraced with a certain solemnity a stable way of life tending toward Christian perfection, with the obligation to maintain it until death. Such a person is in the “state of perfection” even if he has not in fact attained the perfection of charity. Therefore, it can happen that someone is perfect without having embraced a “state of perfection” and others are not perfect despite being juridically in such a state.4 b) The obligation to tend to perfection (religious) or to exercise it for the good of others (bishops) is an obligation that is contracted before God with complete freedom; but once

contracted, it binds or ties vitally the one who contracts it in order to his own state. In the state of perfection to be acquired, the fundamental element is constituted by total consecration to God, that is, by the free acceptance of a stable obligation to tend to Christian perfection through the practice of the three evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience. The perfection to be exercised consists in the lifelong consecration of the bishop to the service of the flock entrusted to him by God. In the present canonical discipline there are four juridically recognized states of perfection: one for the exercise of perfection already acquired (episcopal state) and three to tend to perfection until it is fully acquired (religious, societies of common life and secular institutes). Let us examine them one by one in their fundamental lines. a)

The episcopal state

70, According to the Angelic Doctor, bishops are placed in a more excellent “state of perfection” than religious, since bishops have the mission of perfecting others, something that does not correspond to religious.[5] The bishop has to exercise the perfection already acquired, while the religious has to acquire the perfection he does not yet possess.[6] The two states of perfection relative to bishops and religious are deduced from the two fundamental aspects of charity: God and neighbor. The two states of perfection relative to bishops and religious are deduced from the two fundamental aspects of charity: God and neighbor. Love of God gives rise to the religious vocation; love of neighbor is the foundation of the state of episcopal perfection. 4 Cf. 2-2*184,4; De? perfeetione vitae spmtttalis c.l 5. s Cf. 2-2,184,7. 6 Cf. 2-2,185,1 ad 2.

God more perfect than love of neighbor, the religious state must be more perfect than the episcopal state; for, as the Angelic Doctor warns, bishops must give themselves to things that concern love of neighbor out of the abundance of love of God. And St. Gregory writes: “If the pastoral charge is a test of love, he who, having the necessary qualities, does not want to feed the flock of the Lord, shows that he does not love the supreme Shepherd”, because it is greater love to serve a third party for love of the friend than to serve the friend himself alone. But, on the one hand, he willed to promote in his Church the desire for perfection, to which he exhorts all men, and the practice of the evangelical counsels, which gives rise to the religious life. On the other hand, he has instituted the pastoral ministry, to which he proposes this supreme rule: “The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep” (Lk 10:11). What constitutes for bishops the state of perfection is the perpetual obligation to devote themselves to the salvation of souls. In this formula are contained the three elements of perfect charity towards one’s neighbor. a) Love for one’s enemies, because the bishop’s solicitude must extend to all the sheep without exception, even the obstinate and rebellious ones. In imitation of the Divine Master, he must leave the ninety-nine sheep in the sheepfold to go in search of the one lost sheep. b) The sacrifice of his life, because this daily and constant solicitude of the bishop for his flock must last his whole life. c) The communication of the most sublime gifts of God, since he must exercise the sublime mission of spiritual shepherd. The perfection of charity towards one’s neighbor consists precisely in bringing him closer to God.

Bishops are bound to all these things at their ordination or consecration, just as religious are bound in their profession to the practice of the evangelical counsels8 . St. Thomas dedicates in the Summa Theologica a long question divided into eight articles to the episcopal state. Here are the

conclusions reached by the Angelic Doctor: 1. a It would be a sin of ambition to desire the episcopate for the temporal honors and advantages it brings with it, and an ugly presumption to desire it in order to exalt oneself above others. But it would not be disordered to desire it in order to be useful and profitable to one's neighbor, if, on the other hand, the conditions required for it are met. But it is better not to desire it, unless impelled by evident necessity. 2. a Just as it would be disorderly to desire the episcopate, it is also disorderly to refuse it obstinately against the will of the superior. It is

7 Cf. 2-2,184,7 ad 2. s Cf. St. Thomas, De perfectione vitae spiritualis c. 16-18. Cf. 2-2,185,1-8.

He would thereby be lacking in charity toward his neighbor, refusing to place himself at his service, and in humility, which commands submission to the superior. In reply to the objection that, since the contemplative life is better than the active life and love of God is more perfect than love of neighbor, it seems that the episcopate can be rejected, St. Thomas writes beautifully: "Although the contemplative life is by no means more excellent than the active life and love of God more than love of neighbor, it is certain, on the other hand, that the common good is superior to the particular good. That is why St. Augustine says: "Do not put your rest before the needs of the Church. Commenting on the words "Feed my sheep", St. Augustine says: "It is a service of love to feed the Lord's flock, just as it was a sign of fear to deny the Shepherd". Moreover, prelates do not consecrate themselves to the active life in such a way that they have to abandon the contemplative life, for St. Augustine also says: "Because the pastoral burden is imposed on us, one should not abandon the taste for the truth that is found in

contemplation” 1 0. 3. a It is not necessary that he who is to be appointed bishop be holier than the others” It is enough, on the part of the one who elects him, that he judges him more suitable to govern the Church; and, on the part of the candidate, that he has no impediment that would make that election illicit. 4. a The bishop must not leave his diocese to enter into religion as long as he can be useful to his subjects. But he may do so, with the pope’s permission, when for various reasons he ceases to be useful to them. 5. a Nor should he abandon his subjects because of any temporal discomfort or danger of death, unless, during his absence, he provides sufficiently by others for the spiritual good of his subjects. 6. a The bishop may possess his own goods and leave them in inheritance to his heirs, since episcopal consecration does not carry with it the vow of poverty, which would prevent him from possessing those goods. 7. a The bishop has full dominion over his own goods and can administer them as he sees fit, avoiding, however, any disorderly affection of avarice or lack of charity. But of ecclesiastical goods destined for the relief of the poor he is a simple administrator and can retain nothing for himself without committing an injustice, which would oblige him to make restitution. 8. a A religious who is appointed bishop continues to be bound to practice all the observances of his order which are compatible with his new state and contribute to greater perfection, such as continence, poverty, the habit of his order, etc., but not those which are opposed to the pontifical office, such as silence, solitude, long vigils, which would weaken his strength to the detriment of his subjects, *etc.*

b)

The religious state

Since the study of the religious state constitutes the very object of this entire work, we will examine it here only in its broad fundamental lines, summarizing step by step the magnificent exposition of St. Thomas in Summa Theologica 11. H< Cf. 2-2,18f a.2 ad i. 11 Cf. 2*2,i86-i8g. The numbers correspond exactly to the articles of the question cited in each of the headlines. When we collect the doctrine contained in the solution of the difficulties, we note it in parentheses (e.g., ad 5).

PJ7. Theological aspect of religious life I. In what the religious state consists (q,i86)

The religious state constitutes a true and proper state of perfection, by which religious give themselves totally to the divine service and offer themselves to God by a kind of holocaust. For this reason they are called religious par antonomasia. And since any act of virtue that is ordered to the service and honor of God becomes an act of religion, each and every good act performed by religious acquires the excellence proper to the virtue of religion (ad 2). It is not required, however, that every religious be perfect at a given moment, but rather that he tend and strive earnestly toward perfection (ad 3). The proper end of the religious state is to arrive at the perfection of charity (argument sed contra), 2. The religious is obliged to tend to the perfection of charity. But he is not obliged to practice all the exercises that could lead him to it, but only those that are strictly determined by the rule he has professed. The first foundation for acquiring the perfection of charity is voluntary poverty-as the Lord said to the young man in the Gospel (Mt 19:21)-because it is indispensable to withdraw one’s appetite from all worldly things, according to St. Augustine: “He loves you less, Lord, who loves with you something that he does not love for you” (Confessions 10:29). It is harder to divest oneself of riches already possessed than to renounce attaining them: the first

is to tear off one’s own limb; the second is to reject foreign things. Nor is it an obstacle that the episcopal state is more perfect than the religious state and yet does not require the renunciation of material goods. For the episcopal state is ordered not to acquire perfection, but to exercise the perfection already acquired, governing others and supplying them with spiritual and even material things by means of almsgiving and other works of the active life. And for this they need to possess material goods (ad 5). 4. Perfect chastity is also required, since it is necessary to renounce everything that impedes man’s total dedication to the divine service. And it is clear that the delights of the flesh and the care of the family constitute a great obstacle to exclusive dedication to the love and service of God. However, it should not be concluded that marriage is incompatible with Christian perfection, but only that married people encounter greater obstacles to perfection (ad 1 et 2). 5. Finally, perfect obedience is necessary in the religious state. For, since by its very essence it is a school of perfection, it is necessary that the religious submit to the government and direction of a superior, just as a pupil submits to his teacher. And this voluntary submission in no way diminishes merit or compromises freedom, since there is nothing so meritorious or free as for a man to submit himself voluntarily to obey another for love of God (ad 5)*. 6. It is necessary that the poverty, chastity, and obedience which are practiced in the religious state be sanctioned by a vow, since to constitute a true state of perfection requires a special obligation to devote oneself to things pertaining to perfection, and this special obligation is contracted before God by means of the vow. The religious state consists essentially in the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. And this by a threefold chapter:

C.I

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States of perfection

a) By reason of the end to which it is ordered, which is the perfection of charity. Three are the principal obstacles that oppose our affection tending totally to God: the lust for material goods, the concupiscence of sensible delights, and the disorder of the will. The first is removed by the vow of poverty, the second by the vow of chastity, and the third by the vow of obedience. b) By the all-embracing stillness of whatever may disturb the mind, namely: the administration of external things (poverty), the care of the family (chastity), and the vagaries and caprices of one's will (obedience). c) By the perfect holocaust offered to God by the religious state. Man offers to God all that he is and has: external goods (poverty), his own body (chastity) and his own soul (obedience). The surrender is total and absolute, and therefore the holocaust is perfect. Hence it follows that all other monastic observances are ordered, as such, to the best fulfillment of these three vows, which constitute the essence of the religious state (ad 2). The most excellent of the religious vows is that of obedience. a) Because by it we offer to God our own will, which is a more excellent good than our body and external things, from which it follows that whatever is done by obedience is more pleasing to God than if it were done of one's own free will. b) Because the vow of obedience encloses and contains the matter of the other two vows, and not vice versa. c) Because it is the vow most essential to the religious state, to the point that he who observes poverty and chastity voluntarily, even if sanctioned by a private vow, would not be properly religious without the vow of obedience. Therefore, the religious state is preferable and more excellent than virginity itself kept under a vow. 9. A religious sins mortally if he breaks the vows which he is bound to fulfill by virtue of his profession.

The transgression of other monastic observances is not a grave sin, unless he breaks them out of contempt for the law or against the formal precept of the superior or of the rule itself. There is contempt when the will refuses to submit to what is commanded by the law and, precisely because of this rebellion, voluntarily breaks it (ad 3). 10. A religious who commits a sin sins more gravely than a layman who commits the same sin on three occasions: a) If that sin is contrary to the religious vows (he breaks two laws: the general law that obliges every Christian and the special law that comes from the vow). b) If he sins out of contempt, which brings with it a greater ingratitude toward the divine goodness that chose him for the state of perfection. c) If by his sin he causes scandal to others. But if the religious does not sin against his vows, nor sins out of contempt, nor with scandal to others, but only out of weakness or ignorance, he sins less gravely than the layman in the same kind of sin; because the sin of the religious, if it is light, is absorbed as it were by the multitude of good works that he practices, and, if it is grave, he rises from it more easily, either by the intention, which he ordinarily has rectified toward God, or by the environment and example of other religious.

P.U. Theological aspect of religious life II.

Things allowed to the religious

(q.187)

72. 1. Religious can licitly teach, preach, and the like, for various reasons: a) Because this is in no way opposed to their vows or laws. b) Because they are fit for it by the holiness of life which they profess. c) Because they can receive the necessary jurisdiction for it from the competent authority. This and the following articles were written by St. Thomas principally against the errors of William of Holy

Love, condemned by Alexander VI (D 458-59). 2. It is not licit for religious to engage in secular affairs in order to obtain material advantages for their own advantage; but if the need of their neighbor should require it, they could intervene in them out of charity, with moderation and with the due permission of the superior. Nor does it say good for religious to frequent the palaces of potentates for human motives or advantages; but there is no objection to their going to them for pious causes or to correct and direct them in the ways of God (ad 3). 3. Religious are no more obliged than laymen to obtain their livelihood by manual labor, unless their own rule expressly prescribes it, since the precepts of natural law which pertain to the common good are not all obliged to be observed in the same way, but it is sufficient that some devote themselves to manual labor and others to intellectual work, which is equally necessary for the promotion of the common good (ad 1 et 3). 4. It is licit for religious to live on the alms they receive from the liberality of donors, not in order to give themselves to idleness, but to give themselves fully and more freely to religious exercises and ministries, from which those who offered their alms hope to benefit. Not in order to accumulate wealth or to live idly, but to exercise humility, to provide for one's own needs, or for the benefit of others. 6. Religious can and should wear poor and humble clothing. Not to attract attention, nor out of greed or negligence, but out of a spirit of penance, out of contempt for the vanities of the world, for their own humiliation and for the example of others.

III.

Diversity of religious orders

(q.188)

73. 1. For the greater beauty and splendor of the Church it is fitting that there should be a diversity of orders (argument sed contra). And this diversity is taken either from the different works of charity to which religious can devote themselves, or from the different exercises or observances which can be practiced with a view to the perfection of charity, which is the common end of all religious orders (ad 1 et 2). Since the religious state is ordered to the perfection of charity, which extends to God and neighbor, it is fitting that there should be orders dedicated to the active life (service of neighbor for God) as well as to the contemplative life (direct service of God himself). 3. Nor is there any inconvenience in instituting some religious order dedicated to the militia, not to fight for some worldly end, but to defend divine worship, the good of the country, or the rights of the poor and oppressed. All this falls within the sphere of charity. While these religious could not

to fight on their own initiative, but by the authority of the prince or of the Church (ad 4). 4. It is all the more fitting that religious orders should be instituted for preaching and hearing confessions, since the spiritual good of the faithful is more excellent than their bodily good, and the defense against error and heresy is more urgent than the defense of life and property. 5. It is also most expedient that religious orders be instituted for the study of divine truth. This is for three reasons: a) Because study is so helpful to divine contemplation, enlightening the intellect and leading it away from error. b) Because it is necessary for divine preaching. c) Because it fosters the virtues corresponding to the three religious vows common to all orders. Therefore, religious should not devote themselves to the study of secular or human sciences, except insofar as they are ordered to sacred doctrine. 6. The respective excellence of

religious orders, compared among themselves, is to be taken primarily from the end to which they are ordered, and secondarily from the exercises or observances which they practice. But in such a way that the comparison in relation to the end is absolute (because the end is sought for its own sake), while that which refers to the various exercises or observances is relative (because these exercises are not sought for their own sake, but in relation to the end). Consequently, that religious order will be absolutely more perfect which has a nobler and more excellent end. And if in the end they coincide exactly, that one will be more perfect that has more appropriate means to reach the intended end. According to these principles, the first place belongs to orders of mixed life, that is, those whose activities proceed from the overflowing fullness of contemplation. Such are those who dedicate themselves to the preaching and teaching of divine truth. For just as it is better to enlighten others than to shine for oneself alone, so it is better to communicate to others what is contemplated than to contemplate alone. Second place goes to the orders of contemplative life, because contemplation is better than action, since the former refers directly to God, and the latter to one's neighbor for God's sake. Third place belongs to the orders of the active life, which preferably devote themselves to external occupations in the service of their neighbor. 7. To possess something in particular as one's own is opposed to religious perfection because of the selfishness it can easily engender; but to possess some goods in common is not opposed to religious perfection, but rather favors it, inasmuch as it suppresses excessive concern for temporal things (which could disturb the peace of the soul, hindering the tranquility of divine contemplation), and fosters mutual charity, which puts before what is one's own that which is common to all. 8. The solitary life is proper to those who are already perfect, inasmuch as it is an excellent means of emptying themselves for contemplation. But it is very

dangerous for beginners, who need to place themselves under the direction of those who are already experienced in order to learn the things they are to contemplate and to be corrected of their disordered affections by the example and teaching of others. IV,

Admission to religion

(q.189)

74, 1. There is no objection to the entrance into religion of beginners and imperfect persons, not yet exercised in the virtues. It is precisely the religious state that is a school of perfection, to be acquired by those who are not yet perfected in the virtues.

Those who do not yet possess it or so that those already exercised in the works of virtue may be more and more perfected. Another thing is to be said of holy orders, which require the holiness of the one who is to exercise them. Therefore, only candidates already exercised in virtue should be admitted to them (ad 3). 2. It is a praiseworthy thing-accounting for all the circumstances required for it-to obligate oneself by vow to enter religion, because the vow is an excellent act of religion and confirms the will in the good. 3. He who has bound himself by vow to enter religion must fulfill it in the manner in which he wished to bind himself. And so, he who has bound himself to enter absolutely must do so as soon as possible, that is, as soon as the legitimate impediments cease; and if he has bound himself to enter at a fixed date or under a certain condition, he must do so when the date is fixed or when the condition is fulfilled. It is very probable that the religious profession confers on the one who makes it the total remission of the punishment due

for his sins, since the total surrender to the divine service exceeds every kind of satisfaction for sins, in the same way that the holocaust exceeds all other sacrifices. In this sense we read in the Lives of the Fathers that entrance into religion produces the same effect as baptism (ad 3). 4. If he who made a vow to enter religion intended by it to bind himself to remain in it perpetually, he must fulfill it in this form; but if he made it with the intention of testing whether or not it suited him to remain in it perpetually, he can leave it at any time if he judges it convenient; and if he made it without thinking of persevering or not, he seems obliged to enter in the common juridical form, that is, to experiment during the year of testing whether or not he can persevere in it perpetually. 5. There is no objection to children being educated in monasteries in order that they may later embrace the religious state. But if they were bound to it by a vow before the full use of reason, they are not bound by such a vow; if they made the vow with full use of reason, but before puberty, their parents can revoke that vow; but if they made it after puberty, their parents cannot annul it. 6. It is not lawful for children to enter religion if their parents are in need of their help, so that without them they could not be provided for in their just necessities; but if they are not in such need, children may enter religion even against the command of their parents; for, after puberty, a man is free to decide his future, especially in regard to the choice of state and divine service. 7. Priests with the care of souls can lawfully enter religion, since they are not obliged to perpetually rule the parish, and the excellence of total and perpetual dedication to God by religious vows is superior to any other obligation. 8. It is not praiseworthy to transfer from one religious order to another, unless by necessity or great usefulness; but it could be praiseworthy if greater perfection is sought thereby, or if the order itself is relaxed, or if its observances are superior to one’s own strength. 9. It is lawful and very meritorious to induce others to enter into

religion, provided that all violence, simony, or deceit be avoided. 10. Long deliberations are not necessary to enter into religion, since it is an excellent good, which, moreover, carries with it a time of probation before it is finally embraced. But advice may be sought

who can give it impartially on the impediments that may exist on the part of health and other obligations, as well as to choose the religious order in which it is convenient to enter. c)

Common life societies

75, The second state of perfection to be acquired, officially recognized by the Church, is that of the so-called societies of common life. Historical note. In the course of the centuries, various forms have appeared in the states of perfection-particularly in the religious state-which have determined the corresponding evolution in ecclesiastical legislation. The main cause of this diversity of forms and laws is to be sought in the different needs that each epoch brings with it. Until the 13th century, the canonical legislation of the states of perfection recognized by the Church referred to the monastic orders and to the canons regular. The former professed a strictly monastic life; the latter associated the care of souls with the common life. In the 15th century, the great mendicant orders appeared (Dominicans, Franciscans, Carmelites and Augustinians), which combined the contemplative life with the exercise of the apostolate among the Christian people. In the 16th century new religious families of regular clerics appeared (Theatines, Bamabites, Jesuits, etc.), who took solemn vows; but they did not know the monastic habit and suppressed most of the monastic practices that the mendicants had preserved (choir, long

fasts, etc.) and accentuated their projection towards the exterior apostolate. In the 15th century, the religious congregations of simple vows began to be founded and determined a new and particular ecclesiastical legislation. In the 15th century, societies of common life without public vows were introduced, which, although they are not and are not called religious in the strict sense, imitate religious life and profess the evangelical counsels. In our days, finally, the so-called secular institutes have been recognized by the Church, whose members observe the evangelical counsels while living in the world.

Turning now to societies of common life, here is how the Canon Code describes them: “The society, whether of men or of women, in which the associates imitate the way of life of the religious, practicing life in common under the regime of the superiors, according to the approved constitutions, but without being bound by the three customary public vows, is not a religion properly so called, nor are its members designated in the proper sense by the name of religious” (can. 673).

As can be seen, these societies constitute a less complete canonical state of perfection than that of the religious. It consists of the following elements: life in common, promises or private vows, observance of the evangelical counsels and the tendency to perfection as an end. The types of these societies are very varied, but can be reduced to three main ones:

a) Institutes in which the three ordinary vows have a private character (e.g., the Daughters of Charity), or an external character in that they are received by superiors, but not as representatives of the Church (e.g., the Vincentians or

priests of the Mission). b) Institutes in which only the vow of obedience is taken (e.g., some Oblate congregations) or, in place of the vow, an oath of perseverance or stability (e.g., the Society of the Foreign Missions of Paris, the Pontifical Institute of the Mission), some Oblate congregations) or, instead of the vow, an oath of perseverance or stability (e.g., the Society of the Foreign Missions of Paris, the Pontifical Institute of Foreign Missions, which has its domicile in Milan, and that of Mili Hill, English). c) Institutes in which no vow or oath is taken, but only promises (e.g., the Oratorians of St. Philip Neri, the Sulpicians, etc.). d)

Secular institutes

76* The third type of the states of perfection to be acquired, recognized by the Church, are the so-called secular institutes, whose members live in the world but profess the evangelical counsels in order to acquire Christian perfection and to exercise the apostolate to the full. They constitute a state of perfection in the world, less perfect than the previous ones, but juridically such because they have been approved and recognized by the Church. Its constitutive elements are: incorporation into the institute with a perpetual or temporary bond (but renewable in due time), profession of the evangelical counsels, private vow or profession of celibacy and perfect chastity, private vow or promise of obedience, private vow or promise of poverty. Such vows or promises must be made according to their own constitutions. As is well known, the secular institutes received a letter of nature in the Church by the apostolic constitution Provida Mater Ecclesia, of His Holiness Pope Pius XII, which bears the date February 2, 1947. Given the splendid flowering of the secular institutes and the great increase that they are taking from day to day, we are pleased to reproduce here, in its entirety, the operative part of the Próvida Mater Ecclesia, which will give us a more

detailed knowledge of the intimate nature of the secular institutes.

C.I. The states of perfection

Law peculiar to secular institutes 12 77* Article i. Clerical or lay societies whose members, in order to acquire Christian perfection and to exercise fully the apostolate, profess in the world the evangelical counsels, in order that they may be suitably distinguished from other common associations of the faithful, shall receive as their proper name that of secular institutes or institutes and shall be subject to the norms of this apostolic constitution. 1. Since secular institutes neither admit the three public vows of religion nor impose on all their members a common life or dwelling under the same roof, according to the norm of the canons: i. In law, they are not and, properly speaking, cannot properly be called religions or societies of common life. 2o. They are not bound by the law proper and peculiar to religions or societies of common life, nor can they make use of it except insofar as some prescription of that law, especially of the law used by societies without public vows, has been accommodated and applied to them by exception. § 2. Institutes, except for the common norms of canon law which affect them, are to be governed by the following prescriptions, which correspond more closely to their particular nature and condition: 1. by the general norms of this apostolic constitution, which constitute the proper statute of all secular institutes. 2.0 By the norms which the Sacred Congregation of Religious, as necessity demands and experience advises, may see fit to emanate for all or some of these institutes, either by interpreting the apostolic constitution or by supplementing or applying it. 3.0 By particular constitutions, approved according to the norms of the following articles, which prudently adapt the general norms of law and the special norms described above to the

ends, needs, and circumstances, not a little different from one another, of the individual institutes. Article 3, § 1. In order that a pious association of the faithful, according to the norm of the following articles, may obtain erection as a secular institute, it is required that it have, apart from the other common things, the following conditions: § 2. Concerning the consecration of life and the profession of Christian perfection. Members who desire to be attached to institutes as members in the strictest sense, in addition to those exercises of piety and self-denial to which all who aspire to the perfection of the Christian life must devote themselves, must tend effectively to this by the particular ways here enumerated. i. By profession made before God of celibacy and perfect chastity, affirmed by vow, oath, or consecration binding in conscience, according to the nonna of the constitutions. 2.0 By the vow or promise of obedience, in such a way that, bound by a stable bond, they give themselves entirely to God and to works of charity or apostolate and are always and in all things morally under i* Spanish text published in Ecclesta, Madrid, March 22, 1947.

 the hand and direction of superiors, according to the norm of the constitutions. 3.0 By the vow or promise of poverty, by virtue of which they do not have free use of temporal goods, but have a definite and limited use, according to the norm of the constitutions.

§ 3. Concerning the incorporation of the members into the institute and the bond that arises from it. The bond that unites the secular institute and its members properly so called must be: x.° Stable, according to the norm of the constitutions, or perpetual or temporary, renewable at the end of the term. 2.0 Mutual and full, in such a way that, according to the norm of the constitutions, the member gives himself totally to the institute and the institute cares

for and responds to the member. § 4. Concerning the seats and common houses of secular institutes. Secular institutes, although they do not impose on all their members, according to the norm of law, a common life or commoration under the same roof, nevertheless, it is fitting that they have, according to necessity or usefulness, one or more common houses in which: 1. those who exercise the governance of the institute, especially in the supreme or regional order, may reside 2. the members may dwell or meet together to receive and complete their instruction, to make spiritual exercises, and other similar things 3.0 Members may be received who, because of illness or other circumstances, are unable to provide for themselves or who cannot live privately in their own homes or in the homes of others. Secular institutes depend on the Sacred Congregation of Religious, except for the rights of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide, according to the norm of canon 252.3, with regard to societies and seminaries destined for the missions.

§ Associations which do not have the nature or do not fully propose the end described in article I, and those which lack some of the elements enumerated in articles x and 3 of this apostolic constitution, are governed by the law of the associations of the faithful mentioned in canons 684 and following, and depend on the Sacred Congregation of the Council, except as prescribed in canon 252, § 3, with regard to mission territories. Bishops, but not vicars capitular or general, can found secular institutes and establish them as moral persons, according to the norm of canon 100, § 1 and 2.

§ But even bishops are not to found or permit the founding of such institutes without consultation with the Sacred Congregation for Religious, according to the norm of canon 492, §1 and the following article. Article 6. §1, In order that

the Sacred Congregation for Religious may grant to bishops who previously consult about the erection of institutes, according to the norm of article 2, § 2, permission to erect them, it must be informed, judging on the propriety of all this, of all that in the norms published by the same Sacred Congregation is defined concerning the erection of congregations or societies of common life of diocesan right, and of everything else that has been introduced or in

C.I. The states of perfection

The future should be introduced into the style and practice of the same Sacred Congregation. § 2. Once the bishops have obtained the permission of the Sacred Congregation for Religious, nothing shall prevent them from freely using their own right and carrying out the erection. The bishops are not to omit to send to the same Sacred Congregation an official notice of the erection effected. Secular institutes which have obtained the approval or decree of commendation of the Holy See become of pontifical right. § 2. In order that secular institutes of diocesan right may obtain the decree of praise or approval, it is required, in general, leaving the opportunity to the judgment of the Sacred Congregation for Religious" those things prescribed or defined, or to be defined in the future, contained in the norms and in the style and practice of the Sacred Congregation concerning congregations and societies of common life. § 3. For the first, second, and, if need be, definitive approbation of these institutes and their constitutions, the following procedure shall be followed: i. From the cause, prepared according to custom and illustrated by the vote and dissertation of at least one consultor, a first discussion shall be held in the Commission of consultors, under the presidency of the most excellent secretary of the same Sacred Congregation or of another who shall take his place. 2.0 The whole matter shall then be

submitted to the examination and decision of the full congress of the Sacred Congregation, under the presidency of the most eminent cardinal prefect of the Sacred Congregation, and the experts or the most expert consultors shall be invited to discuss the cause more diligently, as necessity or usefulness may suggest. 3.0 The resolution of the congress is to be referred in audience by the most eminent cardinal prefect or by the most excellent secretary to the Holy Father and submitted to his supreme judgment.

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Article 8 Secular institutes, in addition to their own laws, if there are any, or in the future will be promulgated, shall be subject to the local ordinaries, according to the norms of the law which governs non-exempt congregations and societies of common life. The internal government of secular institutes may be ordered hierarchically, like the government of religions and societies of common life, according to the nature and purpose of such institutes, leaving the judgment as to its propriety to the Sacred Congregation itself. Article 10. As regards the rights and obligations of institutes which have already been founded and approved by the bishops, with the consultation of the Holy See, or by the Holy See itself, nothing is changed in this apostolic constitution. This We publish, declare and sanction, determining, moreover, that this apostolic constitution is and will always be firm, valid and efficacious, and will produce and obtain its full and complete effects, without anything to the contrary, although it is worthy of the most peculiar mention. Let no man, therefore, dare to infringe this constitution promulgated by Us, or to contradict it with reckless boldness. Given at Rome, at St. Peter’s, on the 2nd day of February, consecrated to the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the year 1947, the eighth of Our Pontificate, Pope Pius XII.

PJL As the theological wreck of religious life

A P É.N SAYS

THE DIOCESAN PRIESTHOOD AND THE STATES OF PERFECTION 78, In recent years, mainly as a result of the publication of Cardinal Mercier's magnificent work The Interior Life, the interesting question of whether or not the secular or diocesan priesthood constituted a canonical state of perfection was raised in a great number of ecclesiastical magazines and publications. The immortal pontiff Pius XII came to put an end to all the polemics, settling the question with his supreme authority: the secular priesthood does not constitute a canonical state of perfection, without in any way lowering the exalted priestly dignity, far superior, in itself, to that of the simple non-priestly religious. Let us listen to Pius XII 1 2: "It is contrary to the truth to affirm that the clerical state, as such and insofar as it proceeds from divine right, requires of its members, by virtue of its nature, or, at least, by a certain postulate derived from its nature, the observance of the evangelical counsels, and that therefore it must or can be called a state of evangelical perfection to be acquired. The cleric is not bound, by virtue of divine right, to the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience, and, above all, he is not subject to them in the same way and for the same reason as that which emanates from the vows publicly pronounced by one who embraces the religious state. This does not prevent the cleric from spontaneously and privately accepting such Bonds. In the same way, the fact that priests of the Latin rite are obliged to keep sacred celibacy does not destroy or attenuate the difference between the clerical and religious state. The regular cleric professes the condition and state of evangelical perfection, not inasmuch as he is a cleric, but inasmuch as he is a religious. And if We, by means of the apostolic constitution Próvida Mater Eccle$at, have declared

that the way of life of secular institutes is to be considered as a state of evangelical perfection publicly recognized, by the fact that their members commit themselves in a certain way to the observance of the evangelical counsels, this does not in any way contradict the doctrine which We have just set forth. For there is nothing to prevent clerics from joining secular institutes in order to attain by this kind of life the state of evangelical perfection; but then they will find themselves in the state of perfection to be acquired, not because they are clerics, but because they are members of the secular institute. Indeed, the evangelical counsels, which are proper to the religious state and are practiced in it with the most complete perfection, are also adopted by the secular institute as a rule of life to which it is bound, although by its manner of observing them it does not depend on a regular state, but remains in an external form of life which does not bear any necessary relation to the perfection we are treating of." 1 Cf. Cardinal Mercier, The Interior Life (Barcelona 1930), fourth conference: "Are we or are we not religious ?" 2 Pius XII, address -Annus sacer to the International Congress of Religious of December 8, 19S0.

C.2, Nature of the religious state

Nevertheless, it is a certain and indisputable fact that the priestly dignity is, in itself, incomparably superior to that of the simple non-priestly religious. And that by virtue of the demands that priestly ordination entails, the priest-whether or not he is a religiousis obliged to a greater perfection than that of the simple non-priestly religious.3 We will return to this in another chapter, when speaking of the obligatory nature of Christian perfection.

Chapter 2

NATURE OF THE RELIGIOUS STATE 79. Having studied the "states of perfection" in general, we will now insist a little more on the intimate nature of the religious state, which constitutes the very object of our work. As an outline or starting point, we will take as our starting point the description of the religious state given in the Fundamental Code of the Church. Rather than canonical, our study will be theological, but as a starting point we will take the canonical description of the same. Canon 487 reads as follows: * The religious state, that is, the stable way of living in common, by which the faithful, in addition to the common precepts, also impose on themselves the obligation to practice the evangelical counsels by means of the three vows of obedience, chastity and poverty, is to be held in great esteem by all. ,

We are going to attempt - we repeat - a brief theology of the religious state and of the evangelical counsels, based on the outline provided by the canonical text that we have just collected. The state… First of all, religious life constitutes a state, and a state of perfection, as we have seen in the previous chapter. A state-in the sense in which we take this word here-is essentially, according to St. Thomas, a reality of a sociological order: it is a public, external institution. To this external and public state corresponds, of course, an internal disposition and requirement: the grace of vocation. But in order to enter the religious state it is necessary to contract an external juridical obligation: the public obligation to serve God.

Cf. 2-2,1 £4,8,

in the freedom of the Spirit. Let us listen to St. Thomas himself h "As we have said, the state, properly speaking, carries with it the condition of freedom or slavery. Now, spiritual freedom or slavery can present itself in man under two forms: interior and exterior. "Men see what appears outwardly, but God sees the heart" (i Sam 16:7). Therefore, the interior disposition of man (that is, the fact of possessing the freedom of grace or the slavery of sin) determines a spiritual state in relation to the judgment of God (only God knows whether man is in grace or in sin), while the exterior acts cause him to have a spiritual state in relation to the Church. And in this latter sense we are now dealing with states, insofar as, by its diversity, the Church attains a certain beauty."

… religious…

This is a most essential word in the question at hand. Not only canonists, but often theologians themselves, tend to study questions concerning the religious state almost exclusively from the juridical and canonical point of view-as a state-to the detriment and undermining of its theological and religious dimension. We believe it is high time," writes a contemporary author, "to dust off a truth that has been long forgotten. Paradoxical as it may seem, there is an urgent need to vindicate the religiosity of the religious. It is the only way to rescue perhaps very blurred profiles. It would be unforgivable to neglect it, because, if there is something specific in the professed, it is in religion where it has its roots".

If we want to walk with guarantees of success, to trace in their true perspective the great lines of the theology of the religious state, we must turn-as always-to the Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas. No one has known how to penetrate and discover in the great theological problems the very root from which they start and all their subsequent development. Here are the main landmarks of his thought: i. ° Speaking of the virtue of religion in general, the Angelic Doctor writes: “Whether the word religion is derived from the “assiduous consideration” or from the “reiterated choice” of what we have negligently lost through sin, or from “religation,” the hundredfold is that religion properly implies an order to God. It is to Him, in fact, that we must primarily bind ourselves as to an indefectible principle; to Him, as to an ultimate end, our choice must tend without interruption, and, after having rejected Him by sinning, we must recover Him by believing and testifying our faith.” 1 Cf. 2-2,184,4. The explanatory parentheses are ours. Antonio Maria Javjerre, $. D. B., Dimensiones religiosas de la perfección evangélica, in “Actas del II Congreso Nacional de Religiosos” vol.i (Madrid 1961) p.69-87- Magnificent study, whose fundamental ideas we gather here, sometimes textually. 3 Cf. 2-2,81,1.

C.2. Nature of the religious state

2° Even on a merely natural plane, man would depend entirely on God, as much in his origin (creation) as in his being (conservation), as in his acting (divine assistance), as in his universal tendency to the ultimate end (beatitude). These metaphysical demands also affect oncologically all other created beings; but only man and the angel-rational creatures-can tie a new knot in these natural demands and “connect” themselves with a conscious and free gesture to their Creator 4. It claims as its foundation the knowledge of divine sovereignty; but mere knowledge is not enough for

there to be religion (how many men know that there is a Creator without worshipping him in any way!); this knowledge must be joined to a free, voluntary and gracious acceptance of divine sovereignty and the subsequent religion that man imposes on his whole being. By virtue of natural religion, man is left in an attitude of perfect availability before his God and Lord. It is up to the Creator to indicate positively the channels through which the religious gift is to flow, and it is up to men to docilely submit to his orders. He brought into play an action as unforeseen as it was sovereignly free: the elevation of man to the supernatural order6 , by virtue of which a "new creature" appeared in the world, according to the astonishing terminology of St. Paul (Gal 6:15). St. Thomas explains the scope of this vigorous revealed expression: "It is also said that grace is created insofar as men are 'created' according to it; that is, that from nothing, that is, not by their merits, they are constituted into a new being, according to the Apostle: 'Created in Christ Jesus in good works' (Eph 2:9)" 7.

In the first creation God communicated to all things their natural being. In this second creation, which is even more marvelous, God communicates to man his own divine good, his own Trinitarian intimacy8 . 4 Cf. Contra impugnantes Dei cullum et reiigwnem I c.i n. 5. 5 Cf. 2-2.104,4. 6 Cf. 1,95.1.

Cf. 1-2,110,2 ad 3.

8 Cf. 2 Petr 1:4; lo 14:23; 1 Cor 3:16-17.

We find ourselves in the infinite and gratuitous love of the Creator, who has willed to become Father in relation to his rational creatures. Let us listen to St. Thomas 9: "We distinguish two kinds of love of God for creatures: one

common, with which he loves all things that exist" (Sap 11:25), insofar as he gives natural being to created things; another special, with which he raises the rational creature above his natural condition to participate in the divine good* By reason of this love, it is said that he loves someone absolutely, because with this love God absolutely wills for the creature the eternal good, which is himself".

Consequently, the total submission that the creature should already owe to his God on the merely natural plane, when he receives grace-as a new creature-is colored with filial love, because grace makes him-he truly "creates him"-a child of God* Positive religion, as God conceived it for our first parents and for the whole human race before original sin, can be summed up in a formula as simple as it is sublime: filial submission. 4.0 Adam's sin completely disrupted this sublime divine plan for man. Plunged in the darkness of sin, the whole of humanity was totally lacking in adequate resources to repair the tragedy. "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of the surpassing love with which he loved us, and when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive through Christ - by grace you have been saved - and raised us up and seated us in heaven through Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace through his kindness to us in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:4-7).

The result was a superabundant reparation: "Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more" (Rom. 5:20)10. 10 God could, for example, forgive man his sin without offending against justice, since he who mercifully forgives the offense he has received from another does no one an injury, u. And since God decreed the incarnation of the Word in order to receive from him a reparation of justice on behalf of the whole human race, it was not necessary to carry the incarnation to the madness of the cross 12, since any action

of Christ (a single word, 9 Cf. 1*2,110,1. 10 Cf. 3.1.2. Cf. 3.46.2 ad 3. 32 Cf. 3.46.1.

But God chose the passion of Christ as a redemptive procedure in order to maximize the immensity of his love for us: “because of the extreme love with which he loved us” (Eph 2:4). 5.0 Christ the Redeemer has superabundantly readjusted the filial submission-the very essence of religion-that was disrupted by the sin of Adam, to the point that the repaired scheme is immensely superior to the primitive one. Thanks to the incarnation, man’s filial devotion to God acquired full meaning, because it was the Son himself who rendered to the Father his loving tribute in his own name and in the name of all the redeemed. Beginning with Christ, the ancient filial submission is specified with a further qualifier: Christian. It is a Christian filial submission. This adjective reminds us of the duty to “conform ourselves to Christ” (Rom 8:29), and to “share in his sufferings, conforming ourselves to him in his death” (Phil 3:10), as a response to the embrace that he gave us with the incarnation and with the painful way of the cross of redemption.14 This new “religion” with God through Christ obliges - as is obvious - all Christians without exception, and even all men of the world, since they have all been redeemed by Christ. 6º But this filial Christian submission is still susceptible of a further adjective: religious. Let us specify in what sense. The efforts of religious-that is, of those who have entered into this state of perfection-are fundamentally in the sphere of the virtue of religion, but they carry it to its ultimate consequences. Their whole ambition is, or should be, to maximize, inspired by the “extreme love” of the Redeemer, the response that He

expects from redeemed men. Filial Christian and religious submission indicates an intensity, an effort, a continuous overcoming. This or that particular religious will or will not reach the full realization of this ideal-the personal reaction of a given individual, more or less faithful to his or her vocation, is of no interest; but religious life has the ambition of total religiosity. There is nothing-in practice there should be nothing in it that is not totally and essentially religious. Hence the name religious

-by antonomasia-which those who belong to that state receive. Let us listen again to St. Thomas 15: “As we have already said, when a thing is common to many, it is attributed by antonomasia to the one who possesses it to the greatest degree. Thus the name of fortitude is reserved to the virtue that sustains the spirit in the most difficult things, and that of temperance to the virtue that moderates the most intense delights. Now we have said that religion is the virtue by which we render worship and service to God. Therefore, those who consecrate themselves totally to the service of God, offering themselves to Him in holocaust, will be called religious by antonomasia. That is why St. Gregory says: “There are those who reserve nothing for themselves: their thoughts, their language, their life, all the goods they possess, they immolate them to Almighty God”. And since the perfection of man consists in total union with God, as we have seen, the religious state is a state of perfection.

Note the singular importance of this doctrine. What distinguishes the religious from the laity is not the fact that the former practice the virtue of religion and the latter do not, since both practice it or should practice it. It is only the way of practicing it, the former taking it to its ultimate consequences, that is, to its totality, making of their lives a

true holocaust in honor of God. It is known that, in the Old Law, the holocaust was distinguished from the other religious sacrifices in that in all the others some part of the victim was always reserved for the priest or the offerers, while in the holocaust it was totally consumed in honor of God without reserving absolutely nothing for the creatures. A religious life which is not a true holocaust in honor of God, or in which there is still some place for creatures, is a true caricature of what constitutes the very essence of the religious state as such. We will return to this a little further on, when we speak of the dividing line between the precepts-common to religious and laity-and the evangelical counsels, to the perfect internal and external practice of which religious consecrate themselves. Let us advance a little further in the analysis of the canonical description of religious life, that is, the stable way of living in common. For the canonical form, the Church today demands the common life. To be bound to the three evangelical counsels without common life can give rise to a secular institute-which also constitutes a "state of perfection," 13 Cf. 2-2,186,1.

C.2. Nature of the religious state

although incomplete, as we have already seen, but not to a religious state. The Canonical Code-as we have already seen-prescribes the following: "In all religions the common life is to be diligently observed by all, even in those things that pertain to food, clothing and furnishings. Everything acquired by the religious, including superiors..., should be incorporated into the goods of the house, province, or religion, and any money and all titles should be deposited in the common treasury. The clothing of the religious should be in keeping with the poverty they have professed" (00,594).

This common life, necessary for the religious state by disposition of the Church, implies three things: a)

Incorporation into a society, as opposed to individual and isolated life. b) Living together under the same roof and under the same superior. c) Receiving from a common fund what is necessary for sustenance, clothing and furnishings, “The history of religious life - writes Father Gambari1(5 - is confused with the history of common life. It follows that the legislation of the common life is in a certain sense confused with the legislation of the religious life. The eremitic life, with good agreement, gave way to the cenobitic life, and the latter became the exclusive form of religious life, From that moment on, religious life developed in the common life and for the common life. It is in the common life that the evangelical counsels of poverty and obedience have received a concrete application and realization. Above all, it is due to the common life, which has taken on such diverse forms, that religious life appears so varied, while at the same time retaining the necessary uniformity. In the various religious institutes, the common life, as conceived by the founders, gives a particular stamp to all the observances of religious life, as well as to the exercise of the apostolate proper to each institute. In the common life every religious finds the means necessary to fulfill his vocation to holiness and apostolate. Guided by superiors, assisted by his brothers, supported by rules which determine in the smallest details what he must do, the religious will feel the reality of the Mystical Body of Christ, and, living the life of his community, sanctioned by the Church, he will participate abundantly in the life of Christ”.

… by which the faithful…. Any baptized member of the faithful who feels he has a vocation for it and is not bound by any canonical impediment can embrace the religious state. Precisely its purpose i” In La vida común (in colaborad6n) (Madrid 1961) p.293.

P.II. Theological aspect of religious life

fundamental consists in carrying baptismal grace to its ultimate consequences, striving to practice the virtue of charity-which constitutes the very essence of Christian perfection-with the maximum intensity and extension that it can attain in this life, that is, reinforced by the internal and external practice of the evangelical counsels* …. in addition to the common precepts”. The religious is a Christian before and above being a religious. Baptismal grace is worth infinitely more than religious profession, more than priestly ordination and more than the supreme pontificate: the pope is greater as a Christian than as a pope. Everything that comes after baptism are accidental complements, which come to reinforce and increase the primitive baptismal grace that gave us the being of Christians, begetting us children of God and making us heirs of glory. The greatest day of a Christian’s life is undoubtedly the day of his baptism, and no other anniversary should be celebrated with greater solemnity and gratitude to God, our Father, who on that day admitted us into his family as his children. Every year, on the anniversary of his baptism, St. Vincent Ferrer sang Mass in thanksgiving, and if he was in Valencia, his hometown, he went to the church where he was baptized and devoutly kissed the baptismal font where he was begotten for Christ. This means that the religious, as a Christian, is obliged first and foremost to practice the precepts common to all Christians, and certainly with greater intensity and perfection than those who have not received from God the gift of the religious vocation, which is a sublime grace, although merely complementary to baptismal grace. Among all the common precepts, the great precept of charity stands out in the first place. On this we cannot harbor the least doubt, since the supreme Teacher of humanity clearly and expressly tells us in the Gospel: “One of them asked him, a doctor, tempting him, ‘Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law? And he said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy

soul, and with all thy mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second, like it, is: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two precepts hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Mt 22:35-4°)”.

Let us never forget this fundamental principle: all the practices of the Christian life and all the observances of the Christian life must be

C.2. Nature of the religious state

The religious life can and should have no other purpose than to help us to practice ever more perfectly the great precept of charity. Everything must be subordinated to this. The value of the general practices of the Christian life and of monastic observances must be measured and evaluated in terms of charity: whatever most impels us to love God and our neighbor as ourselves* is of the greatest value to us, whatever the objective value of such practices or observances considered in themselves may be. On the contrary, anything that leads us away from that ever more intense tendency to love God and neighbor constitutes for us a real obstacle in the way of our sanctification, however brilliant and spectacular that occupation or ministry may be. Obedience, however, can never constitute an obstacle for those who succeed in seeing God in the person of the superior and fulfill his commands out of love, as if they had been commanded by God himself. But here we encounter a difficulty, at first glance a very cumbersome one. The supreme law of charity is absolutely binding on all Christians without exception. And not to a certain and determined degree of development, but in all its latitude and extension-“with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind”-so that, as the Angelic Doctor warns, quoting St. Augustine, not even the supreme perfection that charity will attain in heaven is excluded from the precept, It does not

seem, therefore, that between the simple Christian and the religious there is any fundamental difference to be made with regard to the great precept of charity, which constitutes the very essence of Christian perfection. And yet there can be no doubt that the religious is constituted in a state of perfection that is not shared by the simple non-religious Christian. There exists, then, between the two states a fundamental difference, which is not to be sought on the part of the great precept of charity-it would be vain to try to do so-but in the mode or manner of practicing this great precept common to both: on the basis of the internal and external practice of the evangelical counsels, binding oneself to it with vows (the religious) or only with the spirit of the same, that is, without the juridical or external profession of the same that comes from the vows (the simple Christians).

As can be seen, the fundamental difference between religious and laity does not directly affect the great precept of charity-it is the same for both-but rather the different way of practicing the virtue of religion in order to perfect charity. The lay Christian is content to dedicate to the worship of God - the proper object of the virtue of religion - some part of his activities, without devoting to him the whole of his life. The religious, on the other hand, consecrates himself totally and for the whole of his life 1 Cf. 2-2,184.3 ad 2.

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to the worship of God, obliging himself to it with the irrevocable commitment of the vows made publicly in a religious society; a commitment that constitutes him ipso

facto in a “state of perfection”, whatever the degree of personal perfection that the great virtue of charity has been able to reach in him. Let us never forget that, as St. Thomas explains, the religious life aims at eliminating the obstacles that oppose the attainment of the perfection of charity. Here are his own words 2: “We have said before that the religious state is a kind of spiritual exercise for attaining the perfection of charity, and it consists in destroying by means of monastic observances all that is an impediment to perfect charity. These impediments arise from man’s attachment to the things of the earth” (from which he is freed by the vows and the other monastic observances).

The simple Christian, not a religious, is also obliged to eliminate the obstacles in his life that oppose the perfection of charity, since the commandment of love also affects him in all its latitude and extension, as we have just seen, but the way of eliminating these obstacles is different. This leads us hand in hand to establish the fundamental difference between religious and laity, because of the different way of practicing the precepts in relation to the evangelical counsels. … they also impose on themselves the obligation to practice the evangelical counsels,…. Let us listen again to the excellent author we have quoted above, admirably exposing the principles of the Angelic Doctor that illuminate this whole question 3: “For the Angelic, the life of evangelical perfection gravitates on the nimia caritas, the extreme love of Christ, given to us without reserve. It is clear that, as an intoned response, it calls for total dedication, without conditions. When it comes to establishing the dividing line between precepts and counsels, St. Thomas insistently adduces a highly significant adverb: totally. Charity is the figure of Christian perfection. The disciplinary structure of religious life aims at eliminating the obstacles opposed to the attainment of the genuine perfection of charity. This double movement, detachment from creatures

and correlative adherence to the Creator, is the fundamental postulate of the Christian life. It would be offensive to speak of a monopoly of religious. St. Thomas recognizes it expressly2 Cf. 2-2,189,1. * Antonio Maria Javierre, l.c. p. 75-78. We translate the Latin texts in order to facilitate their reading for all kinds of readers.

C.2. Nature of the religious state

The brilliant history of the apostles-the first religious-opens with a relictis omnibus-leaving all things behind-which St. Thomas emphasizes by evoking the Gospel of St. Luke (Luke 1:1). The brilliant story of the apostles-the first religious-opens with a relictis omnibus-leaving all things behind-which St. Thomas emphasizes by evoking the Gospel of St. Luke (Le 5:11). He then explains this gesture of totalitarian detachment, because the deviation towards worldly things poisons the love that we must straighten out for God in all its purity4. Always in this negative, ascetic aspect of the religious life, there is, for the Angelic, only one attitude: “it is necessary to totally destroy attachment to the things of the world “5. 5 In other words: attachment to earthly things slows down the impulse toward the ideal, preventing “man from giving himself totally to the service of God. 6 The pace, on the other hand, is lightened by eliminating this burden: “one arrives more quickly by renouncing totally the goods of this world “7. No other is the function reserved to the three vows, which impose the total detachment from creatures: “To totally abandon these three things, as far as possible, belongs to the evangelical counsels)8. The Angelicus notes very well, echoing the patristic tradition, that it is not enough to imitate half-heartedly the example of the Twelve: “To abandon all things is not enough for perfection; it is necessary to abandon everything in order to follow Christ”.9 Abandoning creatures can be a gesture of contempt, which in no way distinguishes Stoicism and Christianity. It is

necessary for the Christian to fill it with content. And that reality that enriches it is the impulse of correlative adhesion that attracts him to the Creator. Now then: if the rupture was total, the surrender offered to the Lord must also be totalitarian, by symmetry. In professing religious perfection, the professed person not only renounces not only his expired goods; his fundamental attitude has a positive sign, and consists in a total surrender of himself and of his things to God: “by which (the religious holocaust) he offers to God his whole person and his goods”. We have said above that the dividing line that St. Thomas establishes between ordinary Christians and religious is marked by a continuous series of everything and totally. He does not modify his position in this regard. Sondoctrines that complement each other: “Those who live in the world give to God part of their things, reserving the rest for themselves.... But those who live in the religious state consecrate themselves totally in person and goods to God “12 .”^v This is not a rhetorical phrase. The Angelic ‘is conscious of pointing out the specific difference between two states of life, one bound to the common precepts, the other subject even to the observance of the evangelical counsels.... . ‘ > . - Again, the adverb totally illuminates this distinction: “It is necessary for salvation to consecrate something to God’s care. But to consecrate oneself totally and all one’s goods to the worship of God is proper to perfection. -St. Thomas pours out his doctrine in a comparison inspired by Sacred Scripture: all men owe God the religious obséquio. Ordinary Christians satisfy their obligation with a sacrifice of themselves and their things; the religious go further, and not content with sacrifice, 4 Cf. 2-2.186,3. 5 2-2,186,3. 6 2-2,186,4. i-2,186,4. i-2,ro8,4.

8 1-2,108,4.

9 Inivfatth. 10,27.

1° n 12 13

2-2,189,30 and ad 3. 2-2,186,70; cf. 186,5 aá i. 2-2,186,5 ad r. 2-2,186,1 ad 1.

offer to God a holocaust. St. Thomas observes that here too the difference is summed up in the totality of the offering: “This is the difference which distinguishes sacrifice from holocaust: that every holocaust is a sacrifice, but not every sacrifice is a holocaust. For in the sacrifice it was customary to offer part of the victim, but in the holocaust the whole victim was offered “14 . The express application to our subject belongs to the same Angelic Doctor: . Thus, when someone offers to God something of his own, and something he does not offer, it is a sacrifice. But when he offers to almighty God all that he has, all that he sees, all that he knows, it is a holocaust. This is fulfilled by the three religious vows. “15 It is, then, the totality of dedication that characterizes the religious life. It matters little that the offering is insignificant. What counts at the moment of sacrifice on the altar of love is the full availability of affection ready for the most perfect holocaust. It is the totality that introduces a qualitative dimension in an apparently purely quantitative field. St. Thomas explains it in the case of St. Peter: his renunciation has a priceless value because “he abandoned it with such a prompt and determined will, that he would have abandoned everything in the same way if he had had it “17. It is never little when it is all that is offered; a sacrifice is worthless before God, no matter how voluminous it may seem, when the surrender is not total. The totality in religious life invades even the coordinate of time. It is necessary that the holocaust, in order to be authentic, has no end: “For the state of perfection, the perpetual obligation to the things that

pertain to perfection is required, ^accompanied by a certain solemnity “19. St. Thomas explains this requirement of the religious vows: man, unable to dispose of the whole of his life to offer it all at once to his God in a true holocaust, tries to overcome the rhythm of time and to fix his will by means of the vow: “This immobility in the following of Christ is assured by the vow “20. Thus he succeeds, in a certain way, in offering to God his whole life in a single act of offering21. Here again it is the disposition, the openness to totality, that gives value to the act. To give oneself to God in this way’ “belongs immediately to the virtue of religion. “22 To do so without measure, as one who professes his vows does, is tantamount to making a religious holocaust of his whole existence: “The whole of his life will belong to religion” 2K Would anyone dare deny such a conclusion to the Angelicus? It is not a monopoly that St. Thomas claims, but a primacy 25. Nothing better to summarize the foregoing than to transcribe some of St. Thomas’ most felicitous formulas, gleaned from the very heart of his treatise De religiosts: “From whence it is evident that those who make such vows to God, by the excellence of the holocaust, must be called religious par antonomasia” 24. — - ■ }* pe perfeciione vitaé spíníualis c.i i. 16 In Matth. 10,27. 15 Ibid. v. . 18 It seems to us that in this last sentence the author we have just quoted exaggerates a little. Any sacrifice offered to God, however small it may be, does not cease to have its value, even if it does not reach the total perfection of the perfect sacrifice or holocaust. (Author’s note.)

2-2,184,5.

28 2-2,186,6 ad 1. 21 2-2,186,6 ad 2. 22 2-2,82,2 ad 1.

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. 23 2-2,186,1 ad 2. 24 De perfectione vitad spirituaíis c.ll. 25 2-2,81,1 ad 5; cf. GC 3,130.

C.2. Nature of the religious state

“Religion, as we have already said*, is the virtue by which we render worship and service to God. Therefore, those who consecrate themselves totally to the service of God, offering themselves to Him in holocaust, will be called by antonomasia ‘religious’” 2(\ In concise terms, this tells us: 1) That the life of perfection is intimately religious, to the point that its irruptive religiosity surfaces even on the surface of the name. 2. ° That the characteristic note that seals the physiognomy of the religious, distinguishing him from the common of the faithful, is situated precisely in the totality of his offering, which converts his religious sacrifice into an authentic holocaust. The religious does not suffer to leave floating, without correspondence, a love which, because it is superabundant, Christ did not intend to demand under strict precept. The ambition of the professed is to assure the totality of his response. The Christian tends to configure himself to the patient Christ. The religious adds a totality even in that sector that exceeds the precept. In his effort to facilitate the way and to fix his will, he has recourse to a set of means recognized by all as superior to those used by the majority of the simple faithful. All this is ordered, in its intention, to surpass the sacrifice and to arrive at the holocaust”.

... by means of the three vows of obedience, chastity and poverty.... To bind oneself by vow to the practice of the three evangelical counsels of obedience, chastity and poverty is so essential to every state of perfection, that without them it cannot be given even in its most imperfect form, constituted by secular institutes^ A state of perfection can be given without common life and without some other characteristics

of the religious state, but not without the three classic vows of obedience, chastity and poverty, taken publicly in the form determined by the constitutions of the religious order itself or, at least, privately in the form established by the statutes of the secular institute itself. However, they are not the end of the religious life or of any other state of perfectionism, but only excellent means to reach more easily and quickly the end proper to these states of life, which is none other than the perfection of charity: Everything absolutely is subordinated to this supreme end; but the religious, as such, must reach it by the perfect practice of the three vows mentioned above: “by the three vows of obedience, chastity and poverty”. St. Thomas demonstrates with his usual clarity and lucidity that the perfection of religious life consists in the three religious vows. Here are his own words 27: 2* 2-2.186,1.

27 2-2,186.7.

P.IL Theological aspect of religious life

“Three considerations apply to the religious state. The first, insofar as it is an exercise by which one tends to the perfection of charity. The second, insofar as it frees the soul from external worries, according to St. Paul’s words: ‘I would have you free from care’ (I Cor 7:32). The third, inasmuch as it is a holocaust, by means of which one offers to God one’s person and goods. God the person and goods. According to these three aspects, the religious state is constituted by the three vows mentioned. In the first place, considering it as an exercise of perfection, it is necessary that the religious detach himself from everything that could prevent his love from being totally directed to God, which constitutes the perfection of charity. There are three possible obstacles: the love of external goods, which is destroyed by the vow of poverty; the desire for sensible pleasures, especially those of

the flesh, which is destroyed by the vow of chastity; and finally, the disorder of the human will, which is remedied by the vow of obedience. Three things likewise cause man to lose his tranquility: the administration of external goods, from which the vow of poverty frees him; the government of the family, from which the vow of chastity dispenses; and his own personal conduct, in regard to which the vow of obedience removes all concern, by submitting it to the will of another. Finally, “holocaust,” as St. Gregory says, “is to offer to God all that one has”. Man has three kinds of goods: external goods, which are offered totally to God by voluntary poverty; the goods of the body itself, offered for the most part to God by the vow of chastity, by which one renounces the most intense delights of the body; and the good of the soul, which is offered totally to God by the vow of obedience, by which man offers to God his own will, which moves all the other powers and habits of the soul. Therefore, the religious state consists in reality in these three vows”.

But it is necessary to penetrate deeply into the true theological sense of the religious vows, so as not to form a rickety and dwarfed idea of them, which would cause them to lose much of their immense content and transcendental scope. Carpentier28 writes in this regard, “The vow is, in the religious state, the element that attracts the most attention, the one that everyone sees from the outside. The Church considers it essential and has defended it against the attacks characteristic of the time of the Reformation. However, with regard to the threefold counsel, the true object of religious life, the vows are the means: “by means of the three vows”. This is of immense importance, I believe, in order to preserve the true meaning of religious life. For it consists in making the simple “counsels” the new law, the foundation of the whole life. This means exactly that the reason for acting must be taken as Jesus loved for himself, and, as a life, the one he has chosen, since it is his, precisely

because of personal love and not because of obligation. The whole inspiration of religious life lies in the fact that the value of gratuitous love becomes a law. But it is necessary that it remains. The “obligation” of the vows will be a result, and not the other way around. After the triple counsel and the community of love, the vow occupies the third place. We say this in order to understand it well, not to diminish it, because it is an essential element as we have said. Without it there would be no definitive obligation and no state of life. Another important warning. The vow of religion is the vow of the state 2* Cf. Directoire des prétres charges de religietíses (Paris 1954) P-9S-96.

of life. It is not in any way a “particular” vow: a vow of a daily rosary, of a certain virtue, not even a vow of poverty, chastity and obedience considered as three particular virtues among many others. No. It is something quite different: it is the vow of life. Thus the three counsels encompass the three coordinates of human existence, its three great tendencies: outwardly, towards “possessing”; inwardly, towards personal “being” in its two directions: bodily life and human love on the one hand, and life of the spirit and autonomy on the other. And all this human life is inserted, fused, so to speak, definitively in a separate society, in a new social order. The vow of religion is a specifically supernatural and Christian way. No terms of comparison are to be found in created things. It is enough to ask oneself to what man, to what society could we legitimately abandon ourselves thus, outside the public approval and the vigilance of the Church”.

… is to be held in high esteem by all. With these words the Church Code ends its description of the religious state. The Church herself-as is recorded in a multitude of documents throughout history-has always lavished on it the highest praise and has always manifested her particular predilection for it.29 Her constant solicitude for religious life is shown in her Latin and Eastern canonical legislation and in her canonical legislation. Her constant solicitude for religious life is manifested in her Latin and Oriental canonical legislation and in innumerable documents emanating from the Holy See. It is the Church herself who approves, blesses and organizes the institutes of perfection, publicly recognizing them as schools of holiness. The low esteem in which they are held-even if it does not reach the point of formal contempt-is an unmistakable sign of a bad spirit, of sectarian selfishness and of a complete disorientation regarding the ways of God. Chapter 3 THE

VOCATION

RELIGIOUS

Article i

VOCATION IN ITSELF 80, Religious vocation constitutes an exceptional grace which always supposes, on the part of God, a great mystery of predilection for a particular soul. Whatever the theological concept one may have of the intimate nature of the religious vocation, it always supposes, indisputably, an abyss of selective love on the part of God, the author and giver of all good.

Gf. Pius XII, Apostolic Conslitution Provovida Mafer Ecclesia, February 5, 1947.

Until a few years ago there was a great variety of opinions among theologians and canonists about the genuine and true concept of vocation to the priesthood or religious life. All of them contained some truth, but a good part of them were inadequate, because they only examined the priestly or religious vocation from an incomplete and partial point of view: theological or canonical. The immortal pontiff Pius XII, in his apostolic constitution Sedes sapientiae of May 31, 1956, put an end to these opinions and theological disputes, by determining with all exactitude and precision the two essential elements of every religious or priestly vocation: the divine call and the ecclesiastical admission or call. Here are his own words b “First of all, we do not want anyone to ignore that the foundation of every religious or priestly and apostolic life-what is called the divine vocation-is constituted by two somewhat essential elements, namely, one divine and the other ecclesiastical. As regards the first, the call of God to embrace the priestly or religious state is so necessary that, if it is lacking, it must be said that the very foundation on which the whole edifice rests is missing. For he who has not been called by God is neither moved nor aided by his divine grace. If it can be said, without doubt, that there is a true calling of God to any state, inasmuch as the principal author of all states and of all gifts and dispositions, both natural and supernatural, for them is God himself, all the more reason it can and should be said of the religious and priestly vocation, which shines with such sublime splendor and is filled with so many and such great natural and supernatural excellencies that it can only come from “the Father of lights, from whom every good gift and every perfect gift descends” (Iac 1:17). Now, speaking of the second element of the religious and priestly vocation, the Roman Catechism teaches that “those who are called by the legitimate ministers of the Church are said to be called by God. “1 2 This, far from being in contradiction with what we have said about the call of God, is intimately related to it.

For the divine vocation to the religious and clerical state, inasmuch as it destines the one who possesses it to lead publicly a life of sanctification and to exercise a hierarchical ministry in the Church - a visible and hierarchical society - must receive confirmation, acceptance and official direction from the hierarchical superiors to whom God himself has entrusted the government of the Church".

The theological doctrine concerning the two elements that essentially constitute the religious vocation admits of no doubt after the express declaration of Pius XII. To these two essential elements must be added, naturally, the canonical suitability on the part of the subject of the vocation; suitability which, as we shall see, is the effect of the divine call and an indispensable precondition for the legitimate ecclesiastical call. 1 Pius XII, Apostolic Constitution Sedes sapientiae: AAS 43 (i$5ó) P.357* Roman Catechism II c.ó (BAG 1956) p.613.

C3. Religious vocation

Therefore, leaving aside the vocation to the priesthood- which does not enter into our plans and which, on the other hand, is governed by the same principles, mutatis mutandis, that govern the religious vocation-it seems to us that the latter, in its entirety or properly considered, consists of a threefold element: a) b) c)

Special calling by God. Aptitude for that kind of life. Admission by the legitimate superior.

The first constitutes the divine element of vocation, that is, the most characteristic and essential element on the part of God who calls. The second constitutes the canonical suitability on the part of the called subject. And the third formally constitutes the ecclesiastical element of the

vocation, which is none other than the free admission of the candidate by the legitimate superior. Let us now carefully examine each of these three elements of every legitimate religious vocation.

i*

God’s call

81 If we wanted to find the primary origin and the ultimate dogmatic foundation of every human or supernatural vocation, we would have to go back to two great facts, which simple natural reason is able to discover and which divine revelation fully confirms: the finality of creation and the most loving providence of God over all creation, particularly over rational and free creatures. aj The finality of creation. It is a fact that God created all things, bringing them out of nothing by the thaumaturgical spell of his sovereign omnipotence: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1). But, unlike what happens with creative agents, who abandon their artifact once it has left their hands - as the sculptor abandons the statue he has just sculpted, since it does not depend on him in terms of its existence, but only in terms of its manufacture - God never abandons, not even for a single instant, the beings he brings out of nothingness; since, depending on Him as to their existence, if God were to suspend for a single instant His conserving action, the created beings would ipso Jacto precipitate into nothingness, in a manner similar to that in which an electric lamp is instantly extinguished at the very moment when the electric factory ceases to send it the current or electric fluid that keeps it burning.

Now then: God must have proposed some purpose in bringing things out of nothing, since the most elementary philosophy teaches us that every intellectual agent works for an end, and God is the intellectual Agent par excellence. The end intended by God in creation cannot be extrinsic to God Himself, but must necessarily flow back to Him. For, since every agent subordinates his action to the end he intends with it, if God had intended an end other than Himself, He would have subordinated His action to that extradivine end, as is evident. But since it turns out that the divine action is absolutely confused and identified with the divine essence itself-since in God there is no distinction between being and acting, which are one and the same thing1 2-, it would have to be concluded that God had subordinated Himself to a creature (that is, to an extradivine end), which is absolutely and metaphysically impossible: the creature would be above the Creator, the second cause above the First Cause, God would cease to be God. The created beings, coming out of God's hands, must necessarily return to Him, they have been created by God and for God. But since they cannot provide God with any good intrinsic to the divinity-since God is the infinite Good and, therefore, creatures can add nothing intrinsically to him-it must be concluded that created beings are destined by their very nature to the external glory of God, that is, to return to him by way of knowledge, love, and service. And since inanimate beings (minerals) and irrational living beings (vegetables and animals) cannot exercise those acts of knowledge and love (although they can exercise those of unconscious service, following the natural impulse received from the Creator), they perform that God-glorifying function through rational creatures, at the service of which God placed all the lower beings of creation. “This is-writes. Landucci 2-the cosmic law of divine glory. It is the second most general aspect of cosmic vocation. Things, after having been “called” into existence, are “called” to divine glorification.

They are like the strings of a zither from which man-regardless of the angelic sphere, which does not immediately affect the corporeal order-must draw the hymn of divine glorification. In other words, things, after having been called into existence, are called to turn towards their Creator, which is as much as to open their eyes and to discover the sublimity of their own origin and to understand their own greatness insofar as they come from the hands of God and are made sharers in his perfection. 1 Cf. i,19,4c et ad 2; 25,1 ad 2, *etc.* 2 Cf. La sacra vocazione 2.a ed. (Rome 1060) p. 19,

C.3. Religious vocation

The most loving yearnings, because, God being “perfection”, is also “happiness”. ■ . - The vocation to divine glorification (primary end) is closely related to the vocation to one’s own happiness (secondary end). Happiness of truth and goodness, exalted on the supernatural revealed plane up to the beatific possession in the open. To God glory, to man happiness. To God no intrinsic advantage, to man intimate and infinite gain. From this we can see how short-sighted was the anthropomorphic vision that George Hermes had of this vocation to divine glory, as if it implied selfishness or ambition inadmissible in God, when in reality it presupposes nothing other than infinite generosity. Sacred Scripture is explicit about the cosmic law of divine glory: “For from Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things. To him be glory forever and ever” (Rom 11:36). It is a dogma of faith: “If anyone denies that the world was created for the glory of God, let him be anathema” (Vatican Council I: D 1805). b) The providence of God. It is a dogma of faith that all created things, even the smallest and most insignificant, are subject to divine providence; and not only in general, but each one of them in particular. Sacred Scripture expressly tells us that God’s providence extends even to the birds of the air (Mt

6:26), to the lilies of the field (Mt 6:28), to the number of hairs on our heads (Mt 10:30), to the rains and pastures of the flocks (Ps 147:8-9), and so on. This most universal providence of God was defined by the Church in the First Vatican Council (D 1784). How could it be possible to exclude from the universal providence of God something so high and sublime, of such sovereign transcendence for his rational creatures, as the problem of their vocation, that is, the state or way of life in which they will have to realize in this world the concrete and most particular will of God for them? In Sacred Scripture we find abundant testimonies that clearly show the existence of the divine vocation as a special call of God to some specific persons. Just by way of example, here are some texts from the New Testament: "He went up on a mountain and called to him those whom he wished, and they came to him; and he appointed twelve to go with him and to send them out to preach" (Me 3:13). "He called the disciples to Himself and chose twelve of them, and called them apostles" (Acts 6:13). "After this Jesus appointed seventy-two others and sent them out two by two…" (Le 10:1). (Le 10:1). "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (Mt 9:37-38). "It was not you who chose me, but I chose you" (lo 15:16). "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two you choose to take the place of this ministry" (Acts 1:24-25).

P.IL Theological aspect of religious life

"And no one takes this honor for himself, but he who is called by God, like Aaron" (Heb 5:4).

Undoubtedly, from all eternity, God has drawn up a certain plan for each and every one of us, and has designated to each one of us, in the whole of creation, a certain position and a certain mission. The creature may deviate by his

unconsciousness or completely reject that plan, abusing his free will; but, on the part of God, it constitutes without a doubt the vocational plan traced out for that creature from all eternity and in whose realization he would have found the shortest and most expeditious way to reach his ultimate supernatural end. Vocation," writes Colin, "is the echo of a divine selection. From all eternity, God has determined for the man who leaves his hands a state of life: marriage, celibacy, clerics, religion. Everyone must be attentive to hear the message. The world of spirits and bodies is composed of an innumerable multitude of beings, each with its nature, its position, its function and its end. The daisy blooms in the meadows, the lily in the woods, and the edelweis near the snowy peaks. This flower is cultivated for its beauty; that one, for its perfume; the other, for its therapeutic virtues. In the firmament there is a prodigious variety of sparkles and splendors: suns, planets, satellites, immense and cottony dust of stars. Heaven itself also has its hierarchies, from the angel to the seraphim, passing through the thrones, the powers, the dominations and the cherubim. In the Church we find diversity in unity. Although all the baptized have a common origin and identical destiny, each one, nevertheless, has his relative perfection, his reserved place and his role to fulfill. Pilgrims of eternity, all are on their way to the Father's House, but not on the same path. Each Christian has his own special vocation. This vocation is the logical consequence of the creative act. When God brought us out of nothing, he planned in advance our program of life, which he will then try to carry out as well as possible. Absolute master of our being, it is up to Him to use us, according to the designs of His providence, for the glorification of His name. How can it be imagined, in fact, that man is allowed to organize his existence as he pleases, according to the whims of his own will and the fantasy of his passions? The Creator has not abdicated his rights as Sovereign and intends to govern his people, with gentleness

no doubt, but also with force, indicating to each of his subjects his rank, his position and his work. The complete and loving conformity to the divine plans constitutes in reality for a Christian the fundamental law and the unique work of his holiness: to be where God wants us to be and to do always what God wants us to do. What will this newborn become? Founder of another home? Religious? Priest? No one knows, except the same God who has chosen him, and this selection will be the best of all because it has been inspired by infinite science, wisdom and goodness".

Cf. El culto de los votos c.2 (Madrid 1949) p.54-55* Cf.

C'5. Religious vocation

Let it be clear, then, that the religious "vocation" supposes, first and foremost, a "call" from God, in obedience to the eternal plans of a particular predestination for a given soul. The fact that the soul may or may not correspond to the divine call in no way compromises or diminishes the certainty of its existence. But now a practical problem of singular importance arises: How does this call of God manifest itself to the soul? What psychological phenomenon is produced in it so that it notices or perceives this divine call? And if it does not notice or perceive anything within itself, what external signs or manifestations will lead the soul to the conviction that it has been the object of God's special call to the religious life? No single, categorical answer can be given to these questions, precisely because the ways and means of this divine call are so varied. Nothing is so simple," writes Colín, "or so complicated, so luminous or so obscure, so painful or so pleasant, so natural or so astonishing as the genesis of vocations. Each has its own story. From the first steps in life, and as a result of an extraordinary combination of providential circumstances, some believe they have found the path they will never

abandon. When they were six or seven years old, they already exclaimed with great seriousness: “Mom, I will be a priest; Dad, I will be a nun”. It is the river that from the source to the ocean, between two flowery banks and through a wide plain, flows sweetly and majestically, without encountering a single obstacle. It is the beautiful piece of silk or velvet that extends without a fold, with its varied and magnificent workmanship. Others, on the contrary, hesitate for a long time, groping, backward, like travelers lost at night in a dense thicket, in search of the signpost; and suddenly, when the light emerges, the straight path towards the sunny horizon suddenly appears. The religious vocation is also discovered on the occasion of a trial, a bereavement, a failure, a reversal of fortune or an illness. By tearing the flesh or the heart, freeing the soul from futile earthly frivolities, suffering-ad lucem per crucem, by the cross to the light-, ambassador of God, has brought the blinding and imperative response: “Come, follow me!” ; How many have discovered the way of the Trappist or seminary on battlefields or in the midst of prison camps! Horrified by a senseless and criminal world, they have thrown themselves into the midst of solitude, seeking only the eternal. Sometimes the sudden appearance of a vocation is preceded and accompanied by a miracle. It is a fulminating grace which, by splitting an existence in two, tears down a soul, tears it away at a single blow from the worst disorders and directs it definitively towards the apostolate and holiness. How many old sinners have become perfect religious and incomparable apostles! For example, Father Foucauld, to name but one. 4 O.C. p. 8*50.

P,1I. Theological aspect of religious life

Nevertheless, and in spite of the great variety of forms in which the divine call manifests itself, two notes or “constants” are never lacking that reveal the existence of

the vocation in a given soul: a certain inclination toward the religious life-compatible, however, with the rebelliousness of the passions, which do not resign themselves to embrace that kind of life so contrary to their disordered desires^-and canonical suitability, that is, the physical and moral aptitude to embrace legitimately and with guarantees of success the state of perfection. The first element-that is, the inclination to embrace the religious state-can never be entirely lacking, at least in the rational part of man. It is already understood that it would be foolish to throw oneself into this kind of life-which involves so many privations-without feeling the least inclination or attraction toward it. It is not necessary, however, that this attraction be sensible: it is enough that it exists in the rational part enlightened by faith, in spite of all the repugnances and rebelliousness of the lower appetites. As for canonical suitability, it constitutes, as we have already said, one of the three essential elements of the vocation to the religious state. Let us examine carefully its fundamental characteristics.

2.

Suitability or aptitude for the religious life

82. It is evident that the absolute lack of aptitude or canonical suitability for the religious life would argue with full certainty the lack of divine vocation to it. St. Thomas formulates with complete clarity and precision the fundamental theological principle: “Those whom God chooses for a mission he prepares and disposes in such a way that they are suitable to carry it out suitably”. h

Speaking of the priestly vocation-although his words are exactly valid when applied to the religious vocationa contemporary author rightly writes 1 2: “It is undoubtedly a sign of wisdom and power that God manifests the call in the

very being of the subject, by the creation of the dispositions required for the exercise of the priesthood. An argument of analogy could be established with the Thomistic doctrine of predestination and divine love 3. God's pleasure in his saints is prior to their holiness, since it is the source of that holiness;

, ?,4'

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2 Cf. Stadia on vocation in collaboration. Ediciones "Sígueme" (Salamanca 19Ó2) p.208. 3 Cf. I 23,1; I 20,4'.

its virtue proceeds from the love of God, because the divine will is the creator of its object. The same must be said of vocation. God does not call a man to the priesthood because he discovers in him certain dispositions for priestly tasks; it is his call that creates the aptitude. Call and aptitude are, then, two closely united realities. The former escapes direct experience; aptitude, on the other hand, is a sign of the call.

It should be noted, however, that the mere aptitude or suitability for religious life is not enough to deduce, without more, the existence of a divine vocation to it, even if the lack of aptitude is evident proof of the absence of a vocation. There are legions of people who possess all the qualities required for the religious life who, nevertheless, have never felt the least inclination towards it. For this canonical suitability to manifest or reveal the existence of a true vocation, it must be accompanied by the inclination or desire to embrace the religious life together with rectitude of intention, that is, seeking only the glory of God, one's own sanctification and the good of souls. The vocation," Pius XI4 writes in this regard, "rather than a sentiment of the heart or

a sensitive attraction, which can sometimes be lacking or not felt, is revealed in the uprightness of intention of the aspirant to the priesthood, united to that set of physical, intellectual and moral endowments which make him suitable for that state. He who aspires to the priesthood solely for the noble purpose of consecrating himself to the service of God and the salvation of souls, and at the same time has, or at least earnestly strives to attain, solid piety, purity of life in every way, sufficient knowledge in the sense that we have explained above, such a one gives proof of being called by God to the priestly state).

The same must be said with regard to the religious vocation, whether or not it is accompanied by a vocation to the priesthood. The principal qualities or endowments that constitute canonical suitability for the priesthood or religious life belong, according to Pius XI, to three distinct orders: physical, intellectual and moral: Let us examine each of these three orders separately. a)

Physical suitability

83. There is a great variety among religious orders as regards rigor or austerity of life; but, in general, religious life is hard and demands, therefore, an excellent degree of bodily health to be able to bear it physically. It should not, however, be exaggerated. 4 Encyclical Ad catholid sacerdotii, December 20, *935, n. 55.

The criterion of physical fitness," a contemporary author 5 6 rightly writes, "cannot be absolute; it depends on the various priestly activities to be carried out or on the aims of the religious institute. Ordinarily, poor health is an element contrary to the vocation, since it does not seem appropriate

for God to call to a state of life whose fundamental activities cannot be carried out. Lack of health is an impediment to full participation in common life and regular observance. Canon Law (can. 984) indicates as an impediment that which implies grave deformity; it is, therefore, the superiors who must judge, in accordance with their own constitutions, the tenor of life, *etc.* Above all, those illnesses that have repercussions on the intellectual and moral faculties must be considered. The same must be said of mental afflictions: hysteria, psychasthenia, etc., which constitute a very serious impediment to the peace of the communities and a source of displeasure for superiors and scandal for the faithful. Hereditary defects should also be seriously considered: madness, alcoholism, syphilis, which do not appear outwardly, but which sooner or later will manifest themselves, making it impossible to exercise priestly functions or religious life with dignity. However, we should not be too overly overloaded, keeping in mind the affirmation of Sinéty (De): “If we were to exclude from seminaries and novitiates all individuals in whom heredity or personal dispositions give reason to fear the later development of a psychic illness…, we would risk alienating from the priesthood and religious life many who are worthy of it. For in the ancestors of a candidate for the priesthood, going back two or three generations…, it is rare not to find relative defects or psychic disturbances: alcoholism, syphilis and other mental anomalies. This today, especially in certain environments, is frequent, even in the healthiest families” 6. To gauge the degree of physical suitability in the aspirant to the priestly or religious life, it will be necessary to examine the functions to be fulfilled and the peculiar rules and customs of the community where he will have to develop his activity. There are religious orders in which the common life is demanded to the last detail, in such a way that not being able to eat, for example, the same food as the other religious is sufficient reason for not being admitted to profession. Are

these sick people condemned to never be able to knock on a conventual door for the noble purpose of serving God more intensely? Here we should apply the theological aphorism: Sacramenta propter homines. Why not organize other forms of religious life, in which the sick and the healthy would have a place? Do the sick not make a valuable and incalculable contribution to the economy of redemption? To this need responds the foundation of the Dominican Tertiaries of St. Mary, founded in France in 1942, which already have three houses in France and one in Switzerland. They admit any sick person, with the exception of those who are nervous and contagious. They choose mainly those young women who are called to the contemplative life, but who for health reasons are obliged to leave the cloister. The Dominican Sisters of St. Mary profess the rule of the Dominican Sisters of the Second Order, mitigated in those observances that are incompatible with a precarious state of health. Illness will never be an indispensable condition for being received among the Dominican Sisters of Saint Mary; the religious knows perfectly well what her mission is at the foot of the cross. In the congregation they live, helping the less favored sisters with the gifts of nature. Daniel Rops makes 5 P. Máximo de Villapadierna, in Actas del Congreso nacional de perfección y apostólado vd1.3 (Madrid 1958) p.654‘55*. 6 Psycho logia e direzione splrituale (Brescia 1937) 193.

C.3. Religious vocation

praising it “as one of the most beautiful and most charitable initiatives in France in the last twenty years”. Another congregation has recently been founded in Turin, whose members, nuns, are all blind”.

As much or more than the bodily health, one must pay attention to the psychic qualities of the aspiring religious in

order to judge the legitimacy of his vocation. “Apart from the purely morbid forms,” writes Landucci7 , “there are factors of character and psychological tendencies which can have great indicative value, more or less favorable, especially with regard to moral qualities. Two tonalities, above all, deserve particular attention, which, while they can explain, on the one hand, the tendency of certain subjects to abandon the world, contrast, on the other hand, with the healthy priestly or religious psychology, and make one foresee easy disasters in the future: pessimism and melancholy. The depressing pessimism of certain subjects contrasts in a very special way with the psychology of those who want to enlist in the supreme combative battalion of redemption, just as distrust in victory contrasts with the combative psychology of the soldier. In the case of apostolic activity, such distrust is an offense to the divine Captain, who said: “In the world you must suffer, but be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world” (Acts 16:33). Pessimism in the priestly apostolate is all the more dangerous and tendentious because the principal instruments of victory, which are the graces and the object of the same, that is, the end to which the apostolate is ordered, which is divine glory (already given to God, in the end, by the apostolic effort alone, independently of success), cannot be experienced. If we add to this the innumerable obstacles that today oppose the priestly apostolate, it is understandable that the pessimistic priest is fatally condemned to give up his efforts and fall into inertia and quiet living. Melancholy, on the other hand, besides the fact that it also depresses activity, finds great and dangerous nourishment in the isolation of priestly life and in the absence of sensible consolation in the work and in the objects of the priest’s mission. And since the melancholic state cannot be endured for long, it easily inclines to comforting escapes into pleasure, even sinful pleasure. Particularly with regard to chastity, it is certain that

melancholy, because of the psychological tendency to comfort and even, at times, because of spontaneous physiological nervous resonances, can easily lead to sin".

Although this quotation refers properly to the priestly vocation, it has perfect application to the religious vocation and, in a certain sense, with greater reason. Let us recall the insistence with which St. Teresa warns the nuns never to admit to their monasteries persons "who are in a melancholy mood")8. A religious house cannot be converted into a psychiatric sanatorium, unless that is precisely the purpose of a religious institute. 7 Cf. La sacra vocazione 2.* ed. (Roma r$6o) p.161. a Cf. Foundations c.7.

Intellectual suitability

84. In the case of a religious-priestly vocation, intellectual suitability is absolutely indispensable. But even in the case of a simple non-priestly religious vocation-both for men and for women-a worthy and decorous intellectual formation is ever more necessary, taking into account the cultural demands of today's world. In the case of the religious priest, the cultural demands of the Church are ever more pressing. Every clerical religion must have its centers of studies approved by the general chapter or by the superiors, the provisions of canon 554.3 remaining firm. (In this canon it is established that "superiors should place in the houses of novitiate and studies only religious who are exemplary in their regular observance").

§ A perfect common life must flourish in houses of studies; otherwise, students cannot be promoted to orders. Religious duly instructed in the lower disciplines are to apply themselves with solicitude to the studies of philosophy for at

least a biennium, and to those of theology for at least a quadrennium, following the teaching of St. Thomas, in accordance with canon 1366 § 2, according to the instructions of the Apostolic See. (Canon 1366 § 2 reads as follows: “The professors are to expound rational philosophy and theology and inform the students in these disciplines, adhering completely to the method, the system and the principles of the Angelic Doctor, and following them with all fidelity”).

§ During the time of studies, professors and students are not to be required to perform any office which distracts them from study or in any way impedes their classes; but the superior general, and in particular cases other superiors as well, may, as their prudence dictates, exempt them from certain acts of community, and even from choir, especially at night, whenever they deem it necessary to attend to their studies. Canon 590. “Religious priests, excepting only those whom major superiors for grave cause have exempted, or those who teach sacred theology, or canon law, or scholastic philosophy, must be examined every year, at least for a five-year period after finishing their studies, by learned and grave fathers on various subjects of sacred doctrine, indicated in due time beforehand”.

In recent times, the Supreme Pontiffs, beginning especially with Leo XIII, have insisted on the indispensable need for a serious and profound intellectual formation, in keeping with the cultural demands of the modern age. The following quotation from Pius XII in his Apostolic Constitution Sedes sapientiae, May 31, 1956, addressed to religious throughout the world, is worth mentioning for the sake of completeness

Cf. A AS 43 (1956) 354-365.

C.3. Religious vocation

“After having provided for the sanctification of souls, it is still necessary to ensure a very careful intellectual and pastoral formation of the religious cleric. In view of the importance of this matter and of the duties imposed on us by our supreme office, we wish to propose and urge the fundamental principles of this formation. The necessity for religious to receive a solid and complete intellectual formation in all subjects is manifestly deduced from the triple dignity which makes them shine in the Church of God: religious dignity, priestly dignity, and apostolic dignity. For religious, who have as their principal duty the contemplation of divine things, seeking God alone and uniting themselves intimately with Him, and transmitting them to others, must remember that they can in no way carry out this most holy mission properly and fruitfully and raise themselves to a high union with Christ, unless they possess in abundance that profound and ever-perfecting knowledge of God and His mysteries which is acquired through sacred studies. The priestly dignity, which makes those who are clothed with it ambassadors of “the most wise God” (I Sam 2:3) and entitles them to be called by a special title “salt of the earth and light of the world” (Mt 5:13-14), demands a solid and very broad formation, particularly in ecclesiastical disciplines; A formation that can nourish and strengthen the spiritual life of the priest, preserve him from every error and every extravagant novelty, and make him, moreover, a faithful “dispenser of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor 4:1) and a man of God “perfect and complete in every good work” (2 Tim 3:17), The apostolic mission, finally, which the members of the states of perfection exercise in the Church, each one in the measure of his vocation, by preaching, the Christian formation of children and young people, the administration of the sacraments, especially the sacrament of penance, missions among the unbelievers, the spiritual direction of souls and, finally, the daily relations with the Christian people, all these apostolic activities cannot produce

abundant and lasting fruits unless they themselves possess a profound knowledge of sacred doctrine and seek to penetrate more and more deeply into it by means of a study that is never interrupted. The first concern of religious superiors should be to see to this solid and complete formation of the intellect, taking into account the natural development of the young and the distribution of studies, making every effort to ensure that the literary and scientific culture of young religious is at least equal to that of the laity who attend similar courses of study. By doing so, not only will the seriousness of the intellectual formation of the students be assured, but also their selection will be facilitated in due time, and they will be prepared, moreover, to deepen their study of the ecclesiastical sciences by providing them with the means to do so. In philosophy and theology-whose teaching should be entrusted only to suitable and well-chosen teachers-what the holy canons, Our predecessors and We Ourselves have established will be scrupulously observed; above all, the respect and absolute fidelity due to the ecclesiastical magisterium, which must always and everywhere be manifested and from which the spirit of the students must be penetrated; the great prudence and caution with which one must approach the praiseworthy study of new questions that arise in the course of time; finally, the method, the doctrine and the principles of the Angelic Doctor, which must be kept and faithfully followed in the teaching of philosophy and theology to students. With St. Thomas Aquinas as our guide and teacher, we will teach the theology of philosophy and theology.

158

PJI. The theological aspect of religious life

The Church’s teaching will be based on a method that is at once positive and “scholastic”. In the light of the authentic magisterium of the Church, the sources of divine revelation are to be studied in depth, using appropriate means, and the treasures of truth that are discovered are to be clearly explained and effectively defended. For since the magisterium of the Church alone has been entrusted with the authentic interpretation of the deposit of revelation, it must be explained not according to purely human reasoning or private opinions, but with absolute fidelity to the meaning and spirit of the Church. Let the professors of Christian philosophy and theology know that they exercise their office not by their own right and in their own name, but in the name and by the authority of the supreme magisterium and, consequently, under its supervision and direction. From him they have received it as a canonical office; for the same reason, saving the just freedom of discussion on points still open to opinion, they should bear in mind that the power of teaching has been given to them to communicate to their pupils not their own opinions, but the doctrines fully approved by the Church. And all, teachers and students, should always bear in mind that ecclesiastical studies are not only for the purpose of intellectual formation, but also for a complete and solid religious, priestly and apostolic formation. For this reason, they will not seek only success in the examinations, but will try to imprint in the spirit of the students a kind of indelible form or mark, from which they will draw, when the need arises, light and strength for themselves and for others. For this to be so, it is necessary, first of all, that the intellectual teaching be closely united to prayer and contemplation of divine things; that it be complete, omitting no part of the prescribed subjects; that it be coherent and ordered in a complete whole, so that all the subjects form a solid and well-balanced system; that it be wisely conceived to combat current errors and help the needs of our time; that it be up-to-date with modern findings

and at the same time in perfect accord with the venerable tradition; that it be, finally, effectively ordered to the fruitful fulfillment of all pastoral offices, so that future priests may be able to propose and defend, with ease and accuracy, the true doctrine in their sermons and catcquesis, before educated people as well as before the ignorant, and conveniently administer the sacraments, actively promote the good of souls and be useful to all by their words and their deeds".

We can add nothing to these luminous teachings of the supreme magisterium of the Church regarding the intellectual formation of religious priests. Undoubtedly, the intellectual formation of religious women or of non-priest religious does not need to be so profound, and in the majority of cases it cannot be so. But let it not be forgotten that a thorough instruction in the subject of Religion and in the great principles of spiritual theology is absolutely necessary for everyone. And in the case of congregations of men or women dedicated to the teaching and education of youth, the intellectual formation of religious teachers in all branches of human knowledge must be-according to the dictates of the Church-at least equal to that of lay teachers of the same disciplines. Intellectual prestige is of decisive importance

C.3. Religious vocation

to exercise a fruitful apostolate among the modern youth, just as its lack can produce in them catastrophic effects: discredit of religion and even loss of faith. We will return more extensively to this in the third part of our work. c)

Moral fitness

85* The third and principal aspect of canonical suitability for religious life is undoubtedly the moral suitability of the candidate aspiring to it. It is true that the religious state is essentially ordered to the acquisition of perfection, which presupposes that the aspiring religious does not yet possess it, and may even be a sinner recently converted to the life of grace. But he must possess, at least, certain moral qualities which give a solid foundation for presuming that he will one day attain Christian perfection, the full possession of which he intends to attain by entering the convent. These qualities refer, principally, to the possibility of practicing in all their breadth and perfection the three vows of chastity, poverty and obedience that constitute the very essence of the religious state. Given the transcendental importance of this matter, let us examine it carefully. a) Chastity. We have just indicated that an authentic call of God to the religious life can be given to a sinner recently converted to the life of grace, and, in fact, many cases do occur in practice. This means that it is not required to enter religion to have led an immaculate life in the past century, much less to have preserved intact one's baptismal innocence. But there is no doubt that the aspiring religious must have, at least, the firm and unwavering purpose, not only to avoid in the future any sin against chastity-which obliges any Christian, whether religious, priest or layman-> but to reach the perfect and heroic chastity, which supposes the total immolation of the affections of the heart, which must be reserved exclusively for God. Let us listen to a contemporary author admirably explaining this very delicate matter. The reader will forgive the length of the quotation because of its extraordinary interest. The characteristics of suitable priestly chastity," writes Landucci10 , "can be deduced from the consideration of the way of overcoming passion, or of passion itself as a tendency.

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Cf. La sacra vocazione p.i7os$. Although the author properly speaking of the chastity of the

P.II. Theological aspect of religious life

The mode of victory can be very varied. It can be substantially sufficient, or perfect, or more than perfect. The words obviously matter little: what really matters are the concepts. Substantial victory is obtained by eliminating grave sin. The perfect one, by eliminating even the lesser sins: which can be done, undoubtedly, with greater or lesser delicacy of conscience. The more than perfect victory-which could also be called superior or triumphal-is obtained not only by fleeing from sin with the utmost delicacy, but by going beyond it, that is, by going beyond the mere elimination of sin; which, in turn, can be done either in terms of promptness or in terms of totality. Superior promptitude is characterized by the elimination of all discussion or compromise with temptation and by the immediacy and radicity of victory, which implies a special and generous dynamism of virtue. The superiority of totality is characterized by the denial of ‘passion extensively carried to all sectors of the sexual sphere, considered even in its indirect aspects, of vain beauty, natural love, etc., related to the senses and sex, but not strictly sinful in itself; above all, to the immolation of the heart. A good layman, normally on the way to marriage, is obliged in himself to achieve perfect victory, eliminating even the smallest sins, and can purposely attain a very delicate conscience. The love of virtue can even push him to the virtuous superiority of a great promptness in victory. But he cannot and should not abstain and avoid the sexual sphere that is not properly sinful, but should rather be interested in the problems of sex and love and seek honest encounters that will allow him tomorrow to choose the partner of his life and to celebrate marriage. Keeping in such a way the interest for the problem

and the aspiration to the other sex, he will try to extinguish in a certain way the sexual inclination, without arriving, however, to the total renunciation. On the contrary, the young man called to sacred and priestly celibacy, besides finding in the higher goal of apostolic dedication to the divine Spouse the special positive title-well above that of the laity-to tend to the utmost delicacy in the elimination of the most insignificant sins and to superior promptness, will also find the invitation to the utmost superiority of extension, This superiority of delicacy, of promptness and, above all, of totality in the negation of the whole sexual sphere, is the discriminating characteristic of the priestly (or religious) mode of chastity in relation to that of the laity… In order not to confuse what we are saying about priestly chastity with utopian ideals, it should be carefully reflected that all the aforementioned modes of victory, whether of the lay or priestly type, evidently presuppose an apprenticeship and a progressiveness. It would be utopian to pretend that a called person must present from the beginning of his vocation that actual angelic chastity. But he must have or must take such an orientation and such a path. It is a different and superior itinerary to that of lay chastity, which must acquire such an imprint from the very beginning. Even if there were still, perhaps, in the first years of sacral formation, some lack - the subject of casuistry, known to all, concerning the criteria of tolerance - the existence of such an imprint in the development of the aspirant to the priesthood, its observations are perfectly valid when applied to the aspirant to religious life. 11 Particularly important are the norms issued as a reserved document by the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries in 1943 and reproduced on July 1, 1943. and

C.3-Religious vocation

The existence of such a will to total renunciation has a favorable value that is more indicative than the elimination of any fault in those who do not have such an orientation. For the latter gives us the guarantee of having undertaken the right path of priestly chastity, advancing along which he will be able to arrive at absolute triumphal victory; whereas it would be impossible ever to reach this goal if he had mistaken the path.... This mode of superior victory is related to the other characteristic that we indicated above, relative to the tendency. The disinterest that such a mode implies toward the whole sexual sphere, in the sense that we have just explained, is naturally understood in an appreciative or volitional sense, without excluding, for the same reason, the endurance of the natural instinct, that is, of the natural tendency. The volitional renunciation of this instinctive tendency can, however, come about in two ways: either negatively, as pure mortification painfully endured, or positively, as a longed-for and joyful sacrifice to obtain the intimate union with God of that spiritual virginal marriage which characterizes, according to St. Paul (i Cor 7), the priestly state; in which union the heart is not suffocated (mortified = made dead), but surrendered, made sacred (sacrificed = made sacred). Only this second attitude is worthy of priestly chastity. The loving surrender that it implies must be joyful. The positive factor clearly prevails over the negative, and the true tendency of one's being is that of the higher will, not that of the lower inclination, which is equivalent to evading the sexual sphere in order to immerse oneself in the spiritual sphere of divine love, which is the goal of virginity. This higher positive tendency, besides being evidently a fundamental support of the soul in order to achieve total renunciation in the negative sense, expresses the most specific factor indicative of priestly chastity. A young man who is only negatively pure, even if he is so in the superior sense of which we have spoken, does not yet give signs of a priestly vocation, just as on the

worldly plane a young man who would limit himself to fleeing from any attraction to other young women would not thereby give sufficient proof of loving only the chosen one. The contrast between the volitional tendency and the instinctive tendency presents, ordinarily, another relief. Even if it could exist, speaking in the abstract, and even remain permanently, it is not presumable that the God of peace would call to himself a heart destined to remain forever torn by the claim of an inferior love. A young man who, while aspiring generously to the divine union, naturally feels a tenacious, very deep and ever more invasive tendency to sexual love, and even only to the natural pleasures of the heart, even if in the meantime he succeeds in conquering in a superior way, demonstrates a constitution that is unfit to live permanently in the total renunciation of the senses and of the heart. If the situation does not change, he should ordinarily be considered uncalled". b) Poverty. Less important than chastity - what is external to man is worth much less than what is part of his own person - the vow of poverty carries with it, however, a set of unavoidable privations, very difficult to overcome for a spirit accustomed to comfort and gifts, and which does not feel a special attraction for poverty the "Instruction on the careful selection and formation of candidates to the state of perfection and to holy orders" (reserved to superiors and formators) of the Sacred Congregation for Religious, dated February 2, 1961. Religious Life

extreme poverty of which the divine Worker of Nazareth gave us a sublime example. When entering the convent, the aspiring religious must be ready to suffer joyfully for the love of Christ the thousand discomforts and privations that

come from religious poverty. A “vocation” that tries to expand in a community where it expects to find all kinds of comforts and “comfort” is inexorably condemned to failure. Between two monasteries of a certain contemplative order, one located in warm terrain and the other in very cold terrain, a “delicate” soul chose the one in the warm terrain because she “could not stand the cold”. Naturally, a few months later he left the warm monastery. Religious life was not made for soft and “delicate” souls.

c) Obedience. More important than the other two vows - the vow of obedience sacrifices one’s own will, which is worth more than one’s own body and external goods - the vow of obedience demands a series of psychological and moral dispositions absolutely indispensable in every aspirant to religious life. A spirit that is proterverse, critical, independent, stubborn, full of himself, proud, obstinate, loving to contradict everyone, never giving his arm to twist, etc., etc., is not suitable for religious life. When entering a convent, the aspirant must be willing to humble himself and obey in everything, becoming like a child for love of the kingdom of heaven (cf. Mt 18:3). We will return to this at length when we speak of the vow of obedience. d)

Rightness of intention

86* Apart from the fundamental dispositions concerning the virtues proper to the evangelical counsels that we have just recalled, the aspirant religious must have an absolute rectitude of intention in embracing the state of perfection. This means that he must seek and rely solely on supernatural motives: the glory of God, the sanctification of his soul, the service of his neighbor, *etc.* This rectitude of intention is the most essential condition and what constitutes the very soul of man’s vocation. In short, from the psychological point of view, vocation consists of or, at

least, is unequivocally manifested in the firm and permanent will to want to serve God in the religious state to which one feels called. It is evident that this rectitude of intention would be absolutely lacking in anyone who embraces the religious life for exclusively human or selfish motives: for the advantages of the temporal order (dignity, honors, etc.), as a means of a tranquil and peaceful life, or as a way of life, or as a way of life in the service of God.

without complications, to free oneself from the burdens of a family, etc., etc., *etc.* Religious life, both by its nature and by its end, is essentially supernatural in order, and, for this reason, it is to be embraced only for strictly supernatural motives. In confirmation of all this, here is an explicit text of Pius XI which we have already quoted in part above 12: “He who aspires to the priesthood solely for the noble purpose of consecrating himself to the service of God and the salvation of souls, and at the same time has, or at least earnestly strives to attain, solid piety, purity of life in every way, sufficient knowledge in the sense that we have above explained, such a one gives proof of being called by God to the priestly state. He who, on the contrary, moved perhaps by ill-advised parents, would like to embrace this state with a view to temporal and earthly advantages that he hopes to find in the priesthood (as happened more ordinarily in times past); he who is habitually refractory to subjection and discipline, little inclined to piety, little lover of work and little zealous for the good of souls; especially he who is inclined to sensuality and even with long experience has not given proof of knowing how to master it; He who has no aptitude for study, so that it is judged that he would not be able to follow with enough satisfaction the prescribed

courses; all these are not born for priests, and to let them go ahead, almost to the very threshold of the sanctuary, makes it more and more difficult for them to turn back, and perhaps moves them to cross them out of human respect, without vocation or priestly spirit.

Although the pontifical text refers directly to the priestly vocation, it is entirely valid when applied to the religious vocation. e)

Lack of canonical impediments

87. The Canon Code expressly states in canon 538: “Any Catholic who lacks legitimate impediment, is moved by right intention and is fit to bear the burdens of religion can be admitted to religion”.

A little further on-in canon 542-he points out the impediments that would make the admission of an aspirant to religious life invalid or illicit. We have spoken of them elsewhere in this work, to which we refer the reader (cf. n. 8 and 9). Canons 973 and following determine the indispensable requisites for the ordination of clerics and the irregularities or defects that impede it. All this naturally affects clerical religious as well. 12 Pius XI, encyclical Ad catholici sacerdótit n.55.

PJI. Theological aspect of religious life

3.

Admission by the legitimate superior

88. In the text of Pius XII, in his apostolic constitution Sedes sapientiae which we quoted at the beginning of this chapter, it is expressly stated that vocation is constituted by two elements in a certain way essential: one divine (the call of

God) and the other ecclesiastical (the call or admission by the legitimate superior)* Canonical suitability, we said, is the effect of the divine call and a sine qua non condition for the call or admission on the part of the ecclesiastical superior. Now, who are the ecclesiastical superiors who must legitimately admit or reject a given candidate to religious life? A distinction must be made. In the case of religious life, whether clerical or not, the legitimate superiors are those of the order or congregation itself, according to its own constitutions. The Canon Code expressly states: “The right of admission to the novitiate and subsequent religious profession, whether temporary or perpetual, belongs to the major superiors with the vote of their council or chapter, according to the particular constitutions of each religion” (can. 543).

If it is a question of receiving holy orders, the religious superior proposes the ordination of the candidate to the bishop of the diocese where the religious house of the ordinand is located, or to another with letters dimissorial to the diocesan bishop (cf. can. 955.964-966). But the definitive admission to orders belongs entirely to the bishop, who is the one who properly calls the candidate in the name of the Church. This call constitutes precisely the ecclesiastical element essential to every priestly vocation, presupposing the divine call and the canonical suitability of the candidate. Article 2

One of the most difficult problems that can arise in connection with a religious or priestly vocation is the question of its obligatory nature, that is, whether or not it is obligatory to follow it under pain of real sin. Theologians and spiritual authors have discussed this topic at length and have not yet reached an agreement. Fundamentally there are two tendencies: the rigori$tat that always considers true

sin - serious or slight, that there is no real sin - and that there is no real sin.

C.3’ Religious vocation

unanimity in this-not following the vocation or call of God to the priesthood or to a state of perfection, and the broad or liberal which, while admitting the possibility that in certain circumstances, per accidens, the vocation can be gravely obligatory (e.g., when the subject clearly realizes that, in continuing in the world, he would put his own salvation of soul at grave risk, because of the great dangers in which he is involved, etc.), considers, however, that in certain circumstances, per accidens, the vocation can be seriously obligatory, when the subject of the same clearly warns that, by continuing in the world, he would put at serious risk the very salvation of his soul, because of the great dangers in which he is involved, etc.), considers, however, the vocation as a simple advice or invitation towards a more perfect way of life that, in itself, per accidens, would not oblige to sin. The reader will find a serene and judicious exposition of the doctrine that seems to us to be true in the following quotation from a contemporary author: “The obligation to follow a vocation. This is the most difficult of all the problems that arise in connection with vocation and, therefore, the most hotly debated. Leaving aside all opinions and discussions, let us ask Sacred Scripture directly. It does not usually teach us with abstractions and reasoning, but with concrete facts, which reveal to us the laws of the Lord’s providence, from which we must draw the norm of conduct. There is one point that we can make quite clear from the outset. As we have seen above, there is a vocation to faith, to the Christian life, to grace. It is evident that it is an obligation to heed and follow this call of God, since eternal salvation itself is linked to it. The difficulty, therefore, is centered not on this formal and primary element of vocation,

but on the other constitutive element that we spoke about before, that is, on the place, mission or state that each Christian is called to occupy or fulfill within the Mystical Body of Christ; which is what is ordinarily understood by vocation. On this particular point, the question is asked: When God indicates to a soul a specific place in the Church, is it a simple invitation, which one is free to follow or not to follow, or does God want to impose a real obligation? It is a question, in proper terms, of a true state-religious, priestly, matrimonial-not a mere office or profession. We saw earlier how linked in St. Paul's mind were the various stages that comprise the path of vocation: the call to faith in the first place. But let us realize that it is a call, not a vague and general call, not in the abstract, but a call to the Christian faith and life, to live it concretely, as a determined member of the mystical Body of Christ, to contribute to the harmony of the whole and to attain there the full individual development, "to the measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13). Now, all this seems too serious and decisive to be left, more or less, to the discretion of each one. The harmony of the body is presupposed by the free choice of each member, as the Apostle so forcefully affirms. That is why he concludes categorically, with words we have already quoted: "God has arranged the members of the body, each one of them as he willed" (1 Cor 12:18).

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P.IL Theological aspect of religious life

But let us study some concrete cases. In the Old Testament we find four particularly instructive cases in this regard: the vocation of Moses, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Jonah. The case of Moses is most instructive. God appears to him in the bush of Horeb and manifests his will to him, entrusting to him what is to be the mission and destiny of his life. Moses makes one objection after another. Finally, the Lord became angry: “Then the anger of Yahweh was kindled against Moses” (Ex 4:14). We also know the inconveniences that Jeremiah was putting to his mission from the beginning. Many times he complains to the Lord about the hard burden he has imposed on him. Chapter 15 of his prophecy is particularly interesting in this regard. In it he lets it be understood that his complaints have greatly displeased the Lord, but that his mercy still offers him forgiveness, with the promise to forget everything: “If you return, I will return to you and you will continue in my service. If you know how to distinguish the precious from the vile, you will remain my mouth” (Ier 15:19). Ezekiel speaks to us in chapters 2 and 3 of the hard mission that the Lord entrusted to him. And he says: “I was bitter and morose in my soul” (Ezek 3:4). The Lord incessantly inculcates him: “I have made you a watchman in the house of Israel. If I say to the wicked, ‘You shall die,’ and you do not warn him, he shall die in his iniquity, but I will require his blood from you” (Ezek. 3:17-18). The case of Jonah we only need to remember it to realize how much it displeased God to want to avoid the fulfillment of his mission. Baruch also resisted the requests of the Lord, who manifested his will to him through the prophetess Deborah. The latter, in view of his resistance, said to him: “I will go,

yes, I will go with you; for the glory of the expedition that you are about to undertake will no longer be yours” (Jud 4:9). And coming to the Gospels, we find the case of the rich young man, always adduced when the authors deal with this subject. St. Matthew tells us: “When the young man heard this, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. And Jesus said to his disciples: Truly I tell you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 19:16-24). One thing is clear in this episode: the Master was not indifferent to the young man’s cowardice; he was clearly disappointed and displeased. The contrast is much stronger when we take into account the observation of St. Mark: “Jesus looked upon him and loved him” (Mark 10:21). The Master’s disappointment must have been very painful. The same impression is drawn from other analogous cases that the evangelists bring us. The Master, on one occasion, replies to a candidate: “Let the dead bury their own dead”. And to another: “No one who, having put his hand to the plow, looks back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven” (Le 18:57-62). We could quote many more passages from Sacred Scripture, but it would be unnecessarily long. Each one of those that we allege can be discussed, variously interpreted, attenuated. But one thing seems certain to us: that, considering them all together, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that when the Lord calls to fulfill a mission, to fulfill a destiny, it is not indifferent to him whether man heeds his call or not; he is positively displeased by the renunciation, and even by simple resistance. And this displeasure, on the other hand, on the part of God, undoubtedly implies an obligation on the part of man: the obligation not to displease him. How serious is this obligation? This will depend on

of the circumstances of each case. To solve this and other problems that are still pending falls outside our purpose and must be dealt with by theologians".

We believe-in fact, in practice, it is scarcely conceivable that the divine invitation could be refused or disregarded-by the one who is clearly aware of it-without committing a very great imprudence and a real infidelity to grace, which can have grave temporal and eternal consequences. Without meaning by this, or even insinuating, that everyone who leaves the seminary or the religious house, or simply does not decide to enter, has incurred in this imprudence and infidelity to grace: it can be a question of a doubtful vocation, or one that clearly does not exist, whose abandonment is not only licit, but is imposed by the most elementary prudence. César Vaca writes in this regard, "After respecting and accepting the moral doctrine on the responsibility that a vocation engenders and the moral obligation to respond to God's call, there is much exaggeration, even in spiritual books that deal with the subject, about the dangers of abandoning the religious life, without distinguishing sufficiently between cases in which this abandonment is due to one's own will and lack of fidelity to grace, and others in which the vocation has not been revealed with full clarity. For some, the fact that a child has entered an apostolic school or a seminary is already an indisputable sign of vocation, and much more so when it is a matter of a novice or a professed, applying to him then, no doubt with the best intention of fortifying his decision to persevere, the whole doctrine of fear of those who are unfaithful to the will of God. The consequences of this attitude are disastrous for those poor souls who, when they finally leave the convent, return to the world with a real complex of infidelity, which alienates them from religious life. I am sure that many of the scandals caused by former seminarians and religious who enjoy a bad reputation stem

from this process. When they left the convent, they thought they were leaving God in it. From my personal experience I can say that among the many cases of religious and seminarians that I have known and advised to leave their vocation, none of them I could be sure that it was a clear vocation and, therefore, a guilty infidelity. Who can know this with certainty if not God? And if we cannot be certain of the vocation, what right have we to use threats of eternal damnation against these souls? Nothing is lost by encouraging those who have to leave the convent to be good Christians in the world, taking advantage of all the formation and all the knowledge that their stay in religious life has given them. The soul who leaves with these dispositions usually continues a pious life and can render great services in Catholic Action, for example. I even consider worthy of the highest praise the formation of groups of these young people, for the safeguarding and spiritual, and even temporal, protection of the same, avoiding deviations and losses of these souls".

It is a fact, however, that the vocation can be culpably lost by the one who had it true at some point in time. Cf.

P.II, The Theological Aspect of Religious Life

of his life. God never turns back. He who called once, he called forever. St. Paul expressly says that "the gifts and vocation of God are irrevocable" (Rom 11:29). However, man, abusing his free will, can and does sometimes resist the call of God. Whoever does so, with the warning of his guilt, would undoubtedly commit a very great imprudence that could compromise even his own eternal salvation. However, as long as we live in this world, all evils can be remedied, by virtue of the infinite mercy of God. If that poor man who so imprudently resisted the grace of God has already taken an irremediable step (e.g., by contracting

marriage), he still has time to humble himself before God and ask Him to mercifully grant him the graces he needs to fulfill the Christian duties imposed on him by the new state-for which God did not call him-and to grant him a kind of subsequent vocation to marriage to replace the previous vocation to the religious life that he so imprudently failed to take advantage of. Everything has composure in the hands of the One who knows how to create, bringing things out of nothing.

Chapter 4 RELIGIOUS VOWS IN GENERAL In this chapter we will present the doctrine relative to the religious vows considered in general. We shall study the following points: the vow in general, its different classes, the religious vows, their excellence, their social influence, the vow in relation to freedom and to supernatural merit, the effects of the vow in general, and the principal differences between the vow and virtue.

1.

Voting in general

90. The Canon Code gives the following notion of the vow considered in general: “It is the deliberate and free promise made to God of a possible and better good” (can. 1307).

Let us explain this definition word for word h a) A deliberate and free promise, that is, made with exact knowledge of what is promised, with full consent and with complete freedom. 1 Cf. A Brief Treatise on the Religious State.

(Madrid

1961) n.91,

It is required, therefore, that the novice know clearly what he is committing himself to with his vows when he makes profession, and, furthermore, on pain of nullity, that he not make them under duress or induced by grave extrinsic fear. Before making his vows, it is also important that he reflect, probe his own will, and test his own strength,

b) Made to God, since only the vows properly so called, which are acts of the worship of latria, are directed to Him. Vows or promises can be made to God with the intention of honoring the Blessed Virgin or some saint, but the obligation is always contracted before God, just as the sacrifice of the Mass is always offered to God and is always celebrated in honor of the saints. Since the vow is a contract made with God, its fulfillment is an act of the virtue of religion, the most excellent of all the moral virtues, by which we render to the Lord the worship due to him. In addition to the acts proper to it, such as prayer and sacrifice, the virtue of religion can make its own all morally good acts and even indifferent ones, ordering them to God; precisely for this reason persons dedicated to its service are called religious. They are like the virtue of religion personified and always in exercise.

c) Of a possible good, since no one can obligate himself to the impossible. For this reason, the vow to avoid all sins, even very light or semi-deliberate sins, would not be valid, because without a very special favor, this would be beyond our strength. The vow to avoid all deliberate sins would be valid, because it is not impossible. d) And better than its contrary. Otherwise, such an act would not be pleasing to God, nor would the vow attain its proper end, which is to give him glory. Therefore, it cannot be the object of the vow whatever is opposed to a greater good, nor, in general terms, whatever is contrary to the evangelical counsels (such as enriching oneself or conserving goods while being

able to renounce them) and, therefore, for the religious, whatever harms regular observance. These better acts that can be promised to God are, according to the case, obligatory, of simple counsel or indifferent in themselves, but the circumstances that accompany them or the end to which they tend to make them good. a) When the act is already obligatory, the vow adds a new obligation; hence its fulfillment makes it doubly good and meritorious, and its violation supposes two different sins. For example, he who vows not to consent to temptations opposed to the sixth commandment, every time he is faithful to his commitment, adds the merit of the virtue of religion to that of keeping the precept; but, when he fails, he commits two sins: one, against the commandment, and the other, against the virtue of religion. b) If the act is of mere counsel, new excellence is added by the vow.

to what was already a better act than its counterpart. This happens, e.g., with the vow of poverty. c) If it is a question of indifferent acts in themselves, but transformed by intention into good and meritorious ones, by binding oneself to them by vow, they become acts of the virtue of religion. In the religious state, the most indifferent actions done out of obedience, in order to better observe the vow, become an abundant source of merit.

The promise of the vow must be made with the intention of binding oneself under pain of sin, if the promise is broken: this is also one of the essential conditions of the vow. The special sin that the violation of the vow carries with it has the character of sacrilege, which does not imply that it is always grave. It can only be venial if there is parity of

matter; for example, a religious knowingly breaking the vow of poverty in a light matter. Unlike a simple resolution or a simple resolution, which are not strictly binding in conscience, the vow contains a true obligation: it binds the conscience with respect to God, even when one voluntarily imposes this obligation on oneself. The faithful can fix as they please the obligation, the extent and the duration of the vows. This rule presupposes only two exceptions. 1. a No one can bind himself to mortal sin when the matter of the vow is slight. 2. a The religious cannot modify the extent of the vows of religion, but must abide by what is fixed by the constitutions. The aspirant is at liberty to take or not to take the vows, but he cannot modify them in any way.

Since the vow imposes moral obligations, on pain of sin, it will be prudent never to make them without first reflecting and taking advice. Imprudent vows are a source of scruples and displeasure. 2.

Different types of votes

91 There are many kinds of vows, according to the aspect or point of view from which they are considered. And so; i.°.

By reason of the object, the vote can be:

a) Personal, if one promises an act (or its omission) that only the one who offers it can fulfill: e.g., a pilgrimage, to abstain from going to a show. b) Real, if one promises a thing (in Latin res - thing): e.g., to give alms. This vow could be fulfilled through the mediation of another person who wants to give this alms. c) t Mixed, if the two previous things are offered at the same time: e.g., a pilgrimage with alms.

C.4. Religious vows in general 2.

By reason of acceptance:

a) Public, if accepted by the ecclesiastical superior in the name of the Church: such are the religious vows properly so called. They are the most excellent and meritorious. b) Private, if such official acceptance is lacking. 3.0 a) year. b) 4.0

By reason of duration; Temporary, if it is made for a specific time: e.g., for a Perpetual, if it is made for life. By reason of the effects:

a) Solemn, if the Church recognizes it as such (perpetual vows in religious orders, which render contrary acts invalid, e.g., marriage). b) Simple, if the Church so declares (vows in religious congregations, which render contrary acts illicit, but not invalid). 5.0

By reason of the mode:

a) Absolute, if it does not depend on any condition: e.g., giving alms. b) Conditional, if it does depend on some condition: e.g., if health is restored" 6º a)

By reason of form: Express, if it is formulated explicitly.

b) Tacit, if it is implicit in another action: e.g., that of chastity in the subdiaconate. 7.0

By reason of dispensability:

a)

Reserved, if it can only be dispensed by the Pope h

b)

Not reserved, if they can dispense it inferior to the Pope,

3"

Religious vows

92” Among the different kinds of vows that we have just recalled, those that are most interesting to note here, because of their greater relationship with the religious life, are the solemn vows (which are always perpetual) and the simple vows (which can be temporary or perpetual)” Let us explain them in detail 1 2; 1 Only public vows, those made in favor of a third person and accepted by him, that of perfect and perpetual chastity and that of entering a religious order of solemn vows are reserved to the pope. These last two are reserved only if they were made absolutely (unconditionally) and after reaching the age of eighteen <cf. en. 1309). Cf, Brief Treatise on the Religious State n.93-97 and ioi.

P.IL Theological aspect of religious life a)

Solemn vows and simple vows

As we have just said, solemn vows are those recognized as such by the Church. They are always perpetual and are made only in orders properly so called. Simple vows are those made in congregations approved by the Church, without having been declared solemn by the Church. The difference between the one and the other does not lie in their substance, which is identical, nor much less in the ceremonies which accompany their emission. These ceremonies, whatever their splendor, mean nothing with respect to the solemnity of the vows; simple vows can be pronounced with great solemnity, and solemn vows with great simplicity. The one and the other oblige in the same way to the same fundamental observances. They differ only accidentally, that is, in their effects. It is difficult to specify in what the solemnity of religious profession essentially consists. The Code limits itself to declaring that “a vow is

solemn if it is recognized as such by the Church" (en. 1308). In general, solemn vows go more deeply and totally to the root of the being; their bond is more difficult to break. In particular, they render invalid or null the contrary acts if they can be annulled, while simple vows make them illicit only. Thus: a) The simple vow of poverty leaves the right to possess and acquire goods, that is, the right of ownership, and prohibits only their free use; he who, after having taken it, gives without permission, e.g., a part of his patrimony, sins, but the donation is valid, both before the Church and before the civil power. The solemn vow of poverty removes from the root not only the right to dispose of goods independently of superiors, but also the capacity to possess them and to acquire them, even by inheritance from parents, except by special indult of the Holy See. After the solemn vow has been made, any donation made without permission is null and void; the religious would sin and, moreover, the donee would be obliged before the Church to make restitution. b) If a religious bound by a simple vow of chastity marries, this marriage, although illicit and sacrilegious, and thus constituting a grave sin, is nevertheless valid before the Church and the State. If the religious is bound by a solemn vow of chastity, the marriage is likewise illicit and sacrilegious; but, in addition, it is invalid or null before the Church, that is, for the Church it is no more than concubinage.

In the Christian world of better times, the juridical effects of solemn vows were recognized by the civil power, which ensured their execution. In our days, the civil laws, in general, do not recognize them and, therefore, do not protect them; but the Church continues to authorize such

vows. Monastic orders (Benedictines, Cistercians, Premonstratensians, Carthusians...)* 2. Mendicant orders (Dominicans, Franciscans, Carmelites, Augustinians, Chinese priests, etc.). 3 o The clerics regular (Theatines, Jesuits, Piarists, etc.). In the Society of Jesus, certain members take simple vows only. 4.0 The Brothers of St. John of God, the only male lay order.

As can be appreciated, these orders, to which must be added those of nuns, all enjoy greater or lesser antiquity, because until the sixteenth century only solemn profession was known, both in the institutes of men and women. It then seemed necessary to the essence of the religious state and, for a long time, the canonists denied the quality of true religious to the members of the institutes of simple vows that were founded. The Code has put an end to the controversy by considering as religious all those who make vows of religion, even if they are simple. Moreover, the Church, for three centuries now, has not granted the character of solemn vows to the vows of the new institutes. b)

Simple vows may be temporary or perpetual

Temporary are those that the religious, once his probation is finished, issues for a limited period of time: one year or three years, according to the constitutions. Perpetual are those by which the religious binds himself for life. According to current legislation, in all religions, with one or two exceptions, it is obligatory that perpetual vows, whether simple or solemn, be preceded by a period of at least three years of temporary vows (cn. 574). According to ancient legislation, in religious orders the first vows were already perpetual. c)

Reason for temporary votes

It is only out of prudence that the Church determines that the taking of perpetual vows be preceded by a period of temporary vows. This most wise decision allows the religious to better test their strength before giving themselves irrevocably to the Lord, and the institutes themselves are less exposed to con

The professed in temporary vows can, in fact, freely leave the institute at the expiration of the time for which he has bound himself, and in the same way the institute can, for just and reasonable causes, exclude him from the renewal of temporary vows or from perpetual profession (n. 637). The sole reason of sickness is not a sufficient reason for the dismissal of the religious at the expiration of temporary vows, unless it is proved with certainty that he was already sick before professing and that he concealed or fraudulently concealed it (en,637), d).

Effects of temporary profession

Religious in temporary vows enjoy the same privileges and spiritual favors as those in perpetual vows and have the right to the same suffrages after death. They have, however, neither active nor passive voice, that is, they are neither electors nor eligible in the regular voting of the provinces or of the institute, unless the constitutions express the contrary (cn. 578), e).

Renewal of temporary vows

Once the term of temporary vows has expired, they are to be renewed without any interval, unless perpetual profession immediately follows (can. 577). This canonical renewal

requires the authorization of superiors. Since it constitutes a new official commitment, it differs from the renewal of devotion or piety, which, even in the case of temporary vows, does not extend their duration, since it has no juridical value. Religious profession and private vows. The obligation of private vows made in the century before religious profession (for example, of pilgrimages, alms, penances…) is suspended as long as the one who made them remains in religion (in. 1315), since the Church prefers religious profession to all private vows. These vows bind again the one who leaves his institute, unless the superiors have annulled them in virtue of the dominative power they have over the will of their inferiors (en. 1312). Such a suspension of vows made before profession seems to be annexed to religious life rather than to profession; therefore, it is probable that it also extends to novices, since they enjoy the spiritual privileges granted to the professed.

C.4. Religious vows in general

4*

Excellence of religious vows 3

93* Among all the vows, those of religion are the most excellent, for three main reasons: 1. a

The three major obstacles to the kingdom of

and other virtues in our hearts, which are: greed for earthly goods, love of sensual pleasures and disordered attachment to one’s own will. These impulses toward evil need restraint. The simple Christian is content with the moderate use of such goods and pleasures, trying not to cross the boundary that separates the permitted from the forbidden. The religious goes further and commits himself to total renunciation. His vows of poverty, chastity and obedience

are the antemural that he deliberately and voluntarily opposes to the threefold concupiscence. charity

2. a

The religious man is released from the three applications that

to those who live in the world and distract them from the service of God: restlessness caused by the care of temporal goods, by that of governing the family and by that of disposing of one’s own acts. 3. a They are a most meritorious holocaust offered to God, an exercise of perfect charity, by which all the goods to which man is most inclined by his natural impulses are sacrificed to him: earthly goods with all the enjoyments they can procure, by the vow of poverty; the pleasures of the flesh and the joys of family life, by the vow of chastity; independence and exterior freedom, by the vow of obedience. This sacrifice, made for the love of God and for supernatural ends, constitutes one of the most heroic acts of charity that man can freely make. We will return to this in the following chapter.

5*

Social influence of religious vows

94. The vows of religion are excellent not only because of the extraordinary benefits they offer to those who make them, but also because of the immense benefits they bring to the world. Without speaking of the material prosperity to which the old peoples of Europe in particular are indebted to the religious, the latter, by their vows, continue to render to the world the three eminent services of example, expiation, and abnegation. 3 Cf. Brief Treatise on the Religious State n.oS-roo*.

P.II. Theological aspect of religious life

a) Service of good example. Every society needs ideals. If it does not believe in the invisible realities of the hereafter, it surrenders with frenzy to earthly pleasures; it places its god in money, it allows sensuality to reign over it and corrode it, and selfish and brutal force to tyrannize the weak. History proves this to us in civilizations that dispense with God. The religious, consecrated by state duty to the most exalted ideal, are those who maintain it in the world. To the idolatry of money, which hardens hearts, raises nations against one another and gives rise within them to ever more violent social conflicts, the religious, by the vow of poverty, opposes the example of total detachment and voluntary dispossession and raises insurmountable barriers against the invasion of greed and against the injustices it engenders. In the face of unbridled sensuality, whose power is no less destructive than that of money, the religious, with the vow of chastity, proclaims that it is possible to dominate the senses, and by his example encourages households to submit to the sacred laws of marriage. Before the spirit of independence and emancipation that dreams of destroying all authority and does not want to recognize any obstacle, the religious, with the vow of obedience, offers the example of a submission that, far from degrading, ennobles, since it is surrendered only to God. Religious attract people to the practice of the Christian virtues: they do more than what is necessary, so that others are encouraged to do what is indispensable. b) Service of expiation. Sacrifice is the law of existence and the condition of prosperity, both for societies and for individuals. It can even be affirmed that the social expiation is more necessary than the individual one, since in our days there are so many peoples where God is not served publicly and officially. Religious souls are those who, in a special way, atone for nations unfaithful to God; through the vows they become co-redeemers with Christ. How wrong the

world is in its judgments when it believes that in religious houses, particularly in contemplative convents, so many human lives are buried without any use for the common good! c) Self-sacrificing service. The religious practice sacrifice, and this supposes abnegation. The whole of history proclaims

C.4. Religious vows in general

The abnegation of men who consecrate themselves to God in order to sanctify themselves more surely and to serve their brethren better. The army of the religious is par excellence an army of abnegation, an abnegation as sublime as it is universal; for, as poverty removes the hindrances of earthly affairs, chastity the bonds of flesh and blood, and obedience the obstacles of selfishness and ambition, it leaves the religious always in a position to devote himself entirely to the service of his fellow men, to whom he can consecrate all the power of which his spirit is capable and all the generosity that fills his heart. As has already been said, the vows allow religious to practice the most varied forms of self-denial: innumerable works of charity, teaching and education, missionary works, and so on. 6*

Votes and freedom

95 It is a very fashionable assertion among unbelievers and rationalists that religious vows are opposed to human freedom and destroy the personality. In reality the opposite is true. The vows perfect freedom by placing it in a state of necessity to do good, by the moral obligation that the religious voluntarily imposes on himself to do so. In fact, the faculty of doing evil, far from being essential to it, is a deficiency of our freedom. Therefore God, infinitely perfect and free Being, cannot sin. St. Thomas teaches that true freedom consists in being able to fully realize one’s own

destiny, that is, to be able to do good without hindrance; but it is precisely the vows free us from these by protecting us against the whims of inconstancy and the tyranny of the passions, the source of so many faults; therefore, far from diminishing freedom, the vows favor, direct and guide it. By concentrating the energies of the will towards the best, they increase its power, just as dams channel the impetus of torrents and pipes channel the force of steam or of waterfalls. It could also be argued against the sophistry of unbelievers regarding the vows that those who allow themselves to be chained by their passions (passion of money, lust, ambition, etc.) live, to their dishonor and shame, much more bound than are the religious by their sacred commitments. Contracts of sale or lease or marriage also bind and bind; but can it be asserted that these contracts infringe upon human freedom and are therefore immoral? If two persons can mutually feel themselves bound as with

In the sequence of mutual affection and reciprocal promises, why should the religious not be able to bind himself freely to God, the infinitely great Being, and thus see his own personality increased?

7*

Voting and supernatural merit

96 Good works done in fulfillment of a vow are much more meritorious than those done without it, assuming the same degree of charity and fervor of the person in doing them. Let us listen to the Angelic Doctor explaining this doctrine 4: “There are three reasons why it appears more meritorious

and praiseworthy to do things with a vow than without it. The first is because the vow, as we know, is an act of religion or of latria, which is the principal virtue among the moral virtues (second only to the theological ones). The nobler the virtue, the greater the goodness and merit of the act. Thus, when an act of a lower virtue is governed by a higher virtue (e.g., to perform an act of humility or patience for love of God), it ascends in goodness and merit. Not for any other reason do acts of faith and hope have greater goodness and merit when they are governed by charity. Therefore, the acts of the other moral virtues, such as fasting, which is an act of abstinence, and continence, which is an act of chastity, if done by vow, attain greater goodness and merit, for in this case they are included in divine worship as sacrifices. For this reason St. Augustine says in his book De virginitate: "Virginity is not honored as such, but by its consecration to God; it is fostered and preserved by religious continence". The second reason is because he who makes a vow to God and fulfills it submits himself to God to a greater degree than he who only fulfills it. For his submission is not only as to the act, but also as to the potency, since he is left without being able to do anything else. As he who gives a tree with its fruits makes a greater offering than he who only gives its fruits, as St. Anselm observes. And this is the reason why thanks is also given to the one who promises something. The third reason is because, by the vow, the will is immutably fixed in the good. To do something with the will thus affirmed in the good is proper to perfect virtue; just as sin with an obstinate spirit aggravates the fault, in such a way that it receives the name of sin against the Holy Spirit".

8*

Effects of the vote

97* In virtue of the principles that we have just explained, the effects of the vow in general are mainly three: i.° To obligate in conscience to its fulfillment (by a new title if the act on which it falls was already obligatory: e.g., the fulfillment of the sixth commandment). 4

Cf. 2-2,88,6. The explanatory parentheses are ours.

C.4. Religious vows in general

2.q To elevate to the category of an act of the virtue of religion every act practiced by vow. 3.0 To duplicate the supernatural merit of any good deed performed by vow.

Since all the good deeds performed by a religious in the grace of God participate in the virtue of religion by their total consecration to God, the wealth of merits that can be treasured by religious faithful to their vocation is immense. 9*

Differences between voting and virtue

98 In theory, it is easy to understand that vow and virtue are not the same thing: they are two completely different concepts. In practice, however, it is sometimes difficult to say exactly when one fails in virtue without breaking the vow, since one cannot break the vow without also failing in virtue. The following distinctions will help to resolve the problems that can arise in practice 1. 1. a The virtues are habits; the vows, on the other hand, are acts of the virtue of religion, which will have more or less lasting consequences (according to whether they are temporary or perpetual) or more or less serious (according to whether they are simple or solemn), but without ceasing to be acts. Thus, as the vows inform the acts of the other virtues, they add to them the goodness and the merit proper to the virtue of religion, that is, they transform them into religious acts.2 2. 2. a The vows

are excellent means for attaining the virtues. The end that the religious proposes to attain by means of the vows are the virtues themselves. 3. a The direct object of the vows is negative, that is, the deprivation or renunciation of temporal goods (poverty), of sensual pleasures (chastity) and of one’s freedom (obedience). On the other hand, the object of the virtues is positive, since they tend to regulate the affection for earthly things, for sensible pleasures and to properly order the use of one’s will. Therefore, the virtues, which lead us directly to God, are more perfect than the vows, by which we reach Him only indirectly, inasmuch as they remove the obstacles that oppose our sanctification.

4. a The vows do not extend beyond that which obliges us to sin by virtue of the renunciation made by the vow, since their principal end is to contain the religious within the limits of the vowed vows and the divine office.

2 Cf. 2-2,88,5*.

P.11. Theological aspect of religious life

The virtues can progress indefinitely in perfection, taking root more and more in the heart. For this reason, the assiduous exercise of the virtues is more effective for the perfect observance of the vows than the vows for the exercise of virtue. Thus, the more diligent a religious is in the practice of the virtue of poverty, the farther he will be from breaking the vow. 5. a Virtue has a much wider and finer field than the vow, at least in the vows of poverty and obedience. Therefore, virtue can be lacking without breaking the vow, while it is impossible to break the vow without also violating virtue. In the vow of perfect chastity, the vow and virtue have the same field, and, for the same reason, one cannot break the one without also breaking the other, and vice versa. 6. a It is not correct, theologically speaking, to

distinguish between the vow and virtue on the grounds that the former refers only to external acts and the latter extends also to internal acts. It is a fact that one can sin against the vow of chastity even with merely internal acts: e.g., by desiring to commit an act against chastity. As for the vows of poverty and obedience, while it is true that it is more difficult to break them with merely internal acts, it is possible on the basis of effective desires (e.g., desiring to possess something as one’s own and independently of the superior; desiring to do something against his express formal command). These sinful desires fall directly on the very object of the vow of poverty or obedience (and not only on the corresponding virtues) and constitute, therefore, true internal sins against the vow (grave or light, according to the case). Let us not forget that always and in every case the sin is formally in the disordered will.

Chapter 5

The year of probation leads naturally to religious profession, by which the novice is definitively incorporated into the order or congregation that receives him. Profession is an act of supreme importance for the religious. It presents-as we shall see below-near analogies with baptism, which is the great sacrament of Christian initiation, and has also been compared to martyrdom,

C.5. Religious profession

by the oblation and total dedication, in the form of a true holocaust, which religious profession entails. The day of profession is the most ardently desired by the novice. From the moment he felt in his soul the first call of God, the religious profession appeared before him as a sublime ideal, which the imagination, illuminated by faith, shaded with the most vivid colors. The whole work of interior transformation of the novitiate was carried out with this happy day in mind and as an indispensable preparation for it. And once the goal has been reached, the emotions of the day of profession constitute for the faithful religious one of his fondest and most unforgettable memories.

That date separates two lives, two worlds, two completely different sides. It is not one of many episodes of the same life. It is the starting point of a new era; for it gives a new meaning to the whole of existence, channeling it into a rule, into a different way of life, shaping it forever into a state of perfection, a state ‘of perfection’. By the grace of baptism-in effect-we are incorporated into Christ and configured to him. Grace makes us children of God, members of Christ and co-heirs with him. The character that baptism imprints on us

gives us a participation in the priesthood of Christ and consecrates us to God as a holy priesthood (i Petr 2:9), capable of offering worship pleasing to God. Religious profession carries these baptismal demands to their ultimate perfection. It is not that it is precepted for every Christian in such a way that without it he cannot attain perfection; but by religious profession-which only the called and chosen must make-the tendency to perfection becomes a state, acquires a greater firmness and demand than those which affect the simple Christian. By it we tend to the perfect likeness of Jesus Christ, who said: “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor… and come, follow me” (Mt 19:21). With it we solemnly renew and perfect the commitments of baptism, we accept the perfect immolation of our freedom for the sake of obedience, we offer to God the holocaust of ourselves and we consecrate ourselves forever, as a holy thing, to divine service. We are going to expose the following fundamental points regarding religious profession: a) b) c) d)

Religious profession is like a second baptism, equivalent in a certain way to martyrdom. It constitutes a true holocaust of self. It constitutes a true consecration.

Religious profession is like a second baptism.

loo. Christian tradition is in perfect agreement that religious profession constitutes a second baptism. The number of Holy Fathers-both Eastern and Western-and of theologians of all schools who use the formula secundus baptismus in speaking of religious profession is overwhelming. But it is necessary to understand correctly this expression, which has

not always been interpreted with the theological precision and exactitude that would be desirable. First of all, we must start from the premise that religious profession is not a second baptism in the sense of being another baptism similar to the first. Baptism, as is well known, is a sacrament that imprints a permanent seal on the soul-the sacramental character-and therefore cannot be repeated. It was expressly defined by the Church at the Council of Trent (D 852). Nor can religious profession be considered as a simple renewal of the promises of baptism, because this can be done by any lay Christian without thereby entering a state of perfection. Nor can it be considered as a simple renewal of the sanctifying effect of baptism, totally erasing from the soul the guilt and penalty of all the sins committed before its reception. For although it is true, as we shall see, that profession produces these same effects in the one who makes it under the proper conditions, this same result can be obtained by other means (e.g., by plenary indulgence or by an act of perfect charity, such as martyrdom, etc.), without these other means having anything to do with a "state of perfection".

What is proper and characteristic of religious profession, as a second baptism, consists in the fact that through it the demands of baptism are brought to their fullest fullness and perfection. Those same baptismal demands-death for the world and life for God-are ratified and affirmed in such a full and consummated way in religious profession, that this ratification not only produces in the soul of the one who makes it the same effects of baptism-total remission of the guilt and punishment due for previous sins-but also constitutes him in a state of perfection, something that the simple reception of the first baptism did not produce. In this sense it can and should be said that religious profession, as a "second baptism," completes and perfects the sacramental effect produced by the first baptism. Let us listen to a

contemporary theologian explaining with precision and clarity these ideas: “This is the fundamental difference between baptism and religious profession. Baptism signifies the Christian’s participation in the death and re1 Cf. F. Sebastián Aguilar, C. M. F., La vida de perfección en la Iglesia (Madrid igós) p. i74-175.

The resurrection of Christ in all its fullness, and it has the power to produce it; but it does not expressly signify that this effect is realized at that moment according to its full extent and perfection. In the Church, which realizes and administers it as a sign and instrument of Christ’s saving activity, it is rather intended to signify something that begins at that moment and which will have to develop throughout the Christian’s life. Religious profession, on the other hand, means that the effect signified by baptism is conferred and received at that moment, according to the full extent of its meaning and efficacy; that the Christian fully accepts his state of death to this death in union with Christ, in order to live entirely in Him the heavenly life of charity. The Christian who consecrates himself to God expresses his will to receive baptism in the full extent of its meaning and efficacy, to accept in its full extent his death to this world with Christ, in order to live henceforth entirely dedicated to heavenly goods as if he had already effectively died to all things here below. The Church, for her part, also completes the admission of the Christian made in baptism, admitting him to the perfect participation of her interior life, as a member totally detached from the world and belonging to it, according to the whole extent of his life, not only in all those things that pertain to the possession or conservation of charity, but in all that pertains to its integral and perfect

possession, Examined with rigor, there is, therefore, no place to speak of a second baptism, in the sense of another baptism, nor even of a simple renewal of the sacrament; It is rather the administration and reception of the sacrament in all the integrity of his baptismal being, granted by the Church and voluntarily accepted by the Christian, as a means of entering entirely into the kingdom of God without voluntary adherence to this world that would diminish the perfection of his new life as a child of God".

Precisely this voluntary decision made by the one who makes his religious profession to carry out the demands of baptism to their ultimate perfection constitutes an act of perfect charity that produces in his soul-although by this other chapter-the same purifying effect of the sacrament of baptism, that is, the total remission of all guilt and the punishment due for past sins. The soul of the one who has just made his perpetual profession is as clean and purified as if he had just received a second sacramental baptism 2: the sacrament of baptism produces it ex opere operato (that is, by its own intrinsic force, as fire burns by itself) provided that no voluntary obstacle is placed in its way; religious profession, on the other hand, produces this effect ex opere operdntis, that is, by way of merit, by virtue of the act of perfect charity which it presupposes and carries with it when it is made with fullness of knowledge and dedication. Precisely because the totally remissive effect of the guilt and penalty of sin comes from the act of perfect charity that the religious emits when he makes his perpetual profession, it must be concluded that this marvelous effect is not 2

Cf. 3.189.3 ad 3.

It can be renewed an infinite number of times during the life of the religious, unlike the sacramental effect of baptism, which is received only once in a lifetime and cannot be repeated. Each time the religious renews his profession, giving it the fullness of meaning that it should have, that is, total death to the world and exclusive life for God, he performs an act of perfect charity, which produces in his soul the same purifying result of baptism and profession, that is, the total remission of guilt and the punishment due for all past sins 3. 2♦ 2.

Religious profession is in a certain sense equivalent to martyrdom.

ioi* Precisely because religious profession is like a second baptism in that it carries its demands to their ultimate fullness and perfection, it is also intimately related to martyrdom. The martyr, in fact, is the Christian who carries to the ultimate consequences the full configuration with Christ, uniting himself to Him to the point of death, to the point of immolating his own life in order to preserve himself in faith and in obedience to his divine Head, Let us listen to the author we quoted a moment ago explaining admirably the undeniable relationship between religious profession and martyrdom 4: “Since St. Ignatius of Antioch, the whole tradition of the Church considers martyrdom as the perfection of baptism, and the martyr as the perfect Christian. If we now say that religious profession is the perfect and total acceptance of baptism, the relationship between these two ways of consummating baptism jumps out of itself before our attention* What is the true way of comparing and relating them to each other? There is an undeniable intimate relationship between the two; it is shown by the fact that they are both perfections of the same sacrament; it is also highly significant that the formula “second baptism” was applied to martyrdom rather than to

religious profession itself. As in the case of baptism, the facts invite us to clarify the nature of these undeniable relations between religious profession and martyrdom. It is neither possible nor necessary to dwell on the whole process by which the voice “martyr” attains its present meaning in the Church. It is enough for us to know that at the end of the first century it was already a very concrete concept of primary importance in the life of the Church. Martyr is the one who accepts death as profession and consummation of his faith in Christ, the one who loses his life in the confession of his Christian faith. From the first moment, martyrdom is considered in the Church not precisely for its apologetic and testimonial value, but as a true perfection and consummation of the Christian life. The martyr is, par antonomasia, the perfect Christian, the totally justified and redeemed, the saint, and this because the martyr, more perfectly than any other, identifies himself with Christ, is assimilated to the innocent death of Christ and admitted into the supernatural life of the kingdom of God. 3 Cf. Morin, The Monastic Ideal (Montserrat 1931), p. 70. 4 Cf. F. Seeastián Aguí lar, o.c. p. 180-183.

O. Religious profession

The martyr receives and reproduces the obedience of Christ unto death in his own renunciation of life in order to preserve himself in faith and in obedience to the Gospel. No one loves more, as the Lord says, than he who lays down his life for his beloved; nor does anyone renounce the things of this world more than he who dies physically. Martyrdom consummates and ends the Christian life as a renunciation of the things of this world in order to possess the divine life; the martyr decides wholly and perfectly for divine things and completely abandons every other good and every other solicitude; he consummates in the acceptance of death his whole Christian life, his faith, his hope and, above all, his

charity. St. Ignatius of Antioch, with his rare facility in perceiving directly the innermost part of the Christian vocation, leaves it said forever that martyrdom is the perfection of the Christian life, and the martyr the perfect disciple of Christ: “I will be fully a disciple of Christ when the world will no longer see my body”, “This is the moment when I will be born…. Do not prevent me from being born to life” 5, In the acceptance, and even in the search for death in order to be united with Christ, the martyr reaches the possible limit of his theological life. One can neither believe nor hope nor love any more when one has truly and totally given one’s life trusting in the word of Christ about the kingdom of heaven, with the desire and the certainty of coming to possess God in perfect association with the glory of the Lord. There is in martyrdom a complete, definitive, suitably extensive and perfectly efficacious option in favor of Christ, with the consequent perfect renunciation of all things of this world, which contains and realizes in all their perfection the baptismal profession. It is in martyrdom that baptism comes to fully realize all its accepted efficacy with the generous perfection of one who voluntarily accepts that unforeseen and violent death before nature places us on the threshold of the future world. The martyr is the perfectly redeemed one, the one who entirely overcomes the devil in the supreme temptation and perfectly attains the heavenly gifts, the saint par excellence above all the other saints, the intercessor and protector of all the other brothers in the faith 6. With more reason than of profession it can be said of martyrdom that it is a second baptism, in the sense of the extension of baptism to all the perfection of its efficacy. Martyrdom is a baptism that takes us out of this world and unites us immediately with God. Only by paying attention to the concrete realization of the facts can we discover the fundamental differences in both ways of consummating baptism. In martyrdom, an external and hostile element intervenes that destroys the corporal life of the martyr,

provokes his physical death and results in the Christian consummating his complete renunciation of all the things of this world, accepting death for the faith of Christ. In religious profession, on the other hand, this external element does not intervene, directly producing death; from this comes the fundamental difference, the origin of all the others, between the one and the other. If physical death is lacking in profession, it is not because any of the interior elements of martyrdom are lacking, but because the destruction of one's own life is always something produced by a cause outside the will of the martyr. Apart from this fundamental difference, in religious profession there is an acceptance of death as complete as in martyrdom, which is, moreover, physically realized in everything that depends on the will of the Christian. 5 St. Ignatius of Antioch, Ad Romanos (BAC, Madrid 1950) p.475-478. 6 Gf. M. Viller, Le martyre et la perfeótion: Rev. d'Ascélíque et Myslique 4 (1925) 3-2S.

The martyr generally accepts what the enemies of the Christian faith impose on him; the religious, on the other hand, voluntarily seeks his own death in this world without anyone forcing him to do so. The two coincide substantially in being, by different ways, a consummation of the baptismal profession. Profession thus appears as a kind of voluntary martyrdom, as a proper and permanent vow of martyrdom. It is impossible to deny a true continuity between one and the other. If the religious effectively renounces this world and all the natural elements of his life in this world in order to be able to dedicate himself entirely to the life of union with the Lord, this purpose cannot but be entirely in the same line as the will of the martyr, who accepts in its entirety his death to this world in order to

remain united with Christ and have a part in his kingdom; the gesture of the former appears as an effort to achieve interiorly the complete liberation from this world and the perfect union with Christ that the martyr attains through the work of his persecutors. Truly, the perfect life is a permanent desire, like a vow, of martyrdom".

This leads us hand in hand to the consideration of religious profession as a true and perfect holocaust of self. 3.

Religious profession constitutes a true holocaust of oneself

102. We have already spoken above of this impressive aspect of religious profession, but let us insist a little more on it. As is well known, in the Old Law, the name of hoiocaust was given to the sacrifice in which a victim was offered to God to be immolated or totally destroyed. It was offered in recognition of God's sovereign dominion over all things and as a symbol of man's total surrender to his Creator. Religious profession is nothing else. It is true that man cannot physically surrender his whole life in an instant, since his future does not belong to him; but he can commit that future in its entirety, giving it to God by means of a perpetual and irrevocable vow 7. In virtue of this irrevocable vow, the religious, by perpetual profession, alienates totally and forever: a) b) c) d) dence

His ability to possess earthly goods (poverty). The possibility of creating a family (chastity). Autonomy in the development of his own life, that is, his independence and freedom (obedience).

The surrender, as can be seen, is total, and the holocaust complete 8. This begins to be realized in the temporary simple profession

O. Religious profession

but in a fuller and more radical way it is realized in perpetual and solemn profession. With religious profession, the religious breaks with all his past: all his commitments, all his worldly affections, all his plans, all his possessions, his very independence and freedom fall. With it he sacrifices and immolates to God absolutely all that he is and has at present and all that he can be and have in the future. The dedication is absolute, and the sacrifice is total: a true and authentic holocaust* "Christians who live in the world," writes Dom Columba Marmion 9, "also offer sacrifices to God. It is necessary for all of them to sacrifice themselves, to immolate themselves, in order to obey constantly the commandments of God, but for them immolation has certain limits. The simple Christian can offer to God his goods, but he retains the free use of his person; he must love God, but he can dedicate to creatures a legitimate part of his love. On the contrary, he who gives himself to God by religious profession renounces everything: he goes to God with all that he possesses and all that he is: ecce venio; and he offers everything to God without reserve, he makes himself a victim, he immolates himself in holocaust. With profession we say to God: "My God, according to my nature, I could possess the goods of the earth, but I renounce them in order to possess you alone; I could love creatures, but I want to love you alone; I could use my free will, but I offer you my freedom. Not only do we give up external goods and renounce the right to form a family, but we also give up the most expensive thing for us: freedom. And by giving up this strength, we give up entirely to ourselves and we also give up the very root of all activity; we have absolutely nothing left".

This is what gives religious life its immense value before God and its truly extraordinary sanctifying efficacy. But the

religious must be constantly careful to unite his sacrifice and holocaust to the oblation and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, from whom he receives all his value and all his sanctifying efficacy. Without Christ we can and are worth absolutely nothing (cf. Lo 15:5). 4.

Religious profession constitutes a true consecration

103. It is necessary to understand this new aspect of religious profession correctly, so as not to exaggerate or diminish it* It is not, properly speaking, a physical consecration, in the canonical sense of the word-v.g., as that of a consecrated church or chalice-but a moral consecration, although very perfect in its kind. Let us try to explain it. f

Cf. Crtsio, monie c.6.

n.

Properly speaking, consecration is the act by which a thing or a person is made sacred, introducing it into a separate order, marking it with a character that subtracts it from common usage and conferring on it a religious value incomparably superior to all other values. Consecration can normally be performed only by one who has power or dominion over sacred things. Only he alone, as God's representative, is qualified to accept in his name the thing offered, thereby imprinting on it the character of exclusive belonging to God, which is what constitutes or makes the thing sacred. There are many degrees, on the other hand, in the consecration of a thing or person: the exclusivity can be more or less radical, and the sacred character more or less stable. Thus, the sacramental character of baptism,

confirmation and Holy Orders “consecrate” in a most perfect and indelible way the Christian, the soldier and the priest of Christ. A consecrated church or chalice retains its consecration as long as it is not destroyed or destined for profane uses. Alongside these physical or “ontological” consecrations that we have just mentioned, and others like them, there is room for another kind of consecration that is truly constitutive and not merely declarative. These are those which add to the sacred relationship already inscribed in a given person (e.g., by baptism or priestly ordination) a new moral relationship, born of a free determination on the part of the one who contracts it and on the part of the Church which accepts it, by virtue of which the person is once again “consecrated” to God by a special bond which he did not possess before and which constitutes him a sacred person by this new title. This is, properly speaking, religious profession, which makes the person who makes it sacred, with all the canonical rights and privileges attached to such persons.10 The religious is, therefore, a “consecrated person. The acceptance of his holocaust by the superior in the name of God and his Church makes him “divine property” by a new and singular title that reinforces those of creation and baptism. The religious is a holy thing: to lay one’s hand violently on him is sacrilege (cn. 119). In speaking of this mystical consecration of the religious, Colin n. 10 rightly writes: Canon 614 says: “Religious, including laymen and novices, enjoy the clerical privileges which are dealt with in canons non-i23” Among them is the so-called “privilege of the canon”, by virtue of which the crime of sacrilege is committed by anyone who inflicts on a cleric or religious a reoi injury, e.g., by beating him, imprisoning him, *etc.* (cf. cnaig) and incurs excommunication reserved to the proper ordinary (cf. en. 2343 § 4). 11 Cf. El culto de los votos (Madrid 1949) p.27 “j.

O. Religious profession

“Everything is offered and consecrated, and in this gift of self there is something sacred and divine that is not found, at least to the same degree, in other oblations. The Christian can, as soon as he wakes up, in morning prayer, in meditation, raise his soul to the Creator and offer him, with his heart, his labors, his sufferings and his whole life; but this oblation, even if it is supernatural, does not have the same scope as a religious profession. In the latter, the offering is accompanied by a vow that cannot be violated without sacrilege. What was only a surrender has become a consecration? And just as a temple, an altar, a chalice, by virtue of its very consecration, is reserved exclusively for divine worship, so the religious consecrated to God exists only for Him, to adore, bless, pray, love and serve Him. If one looks at the exterior and other aspects, he has not changed his life as a man: he eats, sleeps, speaks, works normally, teaches, takes care of the sick; but under these appearances is hidden, like Christ under the sacramental species, a profound and divine life. In everything, everywhere and always religious, he lives faithfully for the Father (cf. Io 6:57). Praising God is the continuous occupation in heaven: the same in religion, because everything that is done in it is directed to the praise of God”.

By virtue of profession, the virtue of religion-the first among all the moral virtues, which immediately follows the theological virtues in dignity and perfection-becomes in the religious a kind of professional virtue, by which his whole life is dedicated to divine worship. The fulfillment of his vows gives off the odor of sacrifice pleasing to God (cf. Lev 1:9). The acts of the religious, under the impulse of the virtue of religion, will have the merit and the crown of the queen of moral virtues. However, let us not think that religious profession is of such a nature that, once made, it produces

its sanctifying or meritorious effects in an uninterrupted and automatic way. In reality it has no meaning or value except on condition that it is actualized in daily details, that is to say, on the basis of continuous renewals. Bossuet severely criticizes the pseudomistic and, at bottom, materialistic illusion of those who believe that acts, once put in place and not retracted, do not need to be renewed any more l2. Profession is not a sacrament that produces its effects ex opere opéralo, nor is it a magic wand that converts forever into gold the whole subsequent life of the religious. It is well known in good theology that the usual elements are not enough for perfection and supernatural merit; what is needed is the actual intention or, at least, the virtual intention that has not been retracted 13. This means that there is hardly anything more important in the religious life-as in the Christian life in general-than 12 Cf. Bossuet, Instruction sur les états d'oraison tr.i l.i n.i7ff. 13 St. Thomas Jo repeats constantly. See, for example, 3,34,2: "Perfectio autem ultima non consistit in potentia vel in habitu, sed in operatione."

continually rectify our intention so that the supernatural motives may so powerfully influence our good works that they really determine them and not merely join them as something concomitant to the less perfect motive that has properly determined them. When a person is going to perform a good deed because he likes it (determining motive), it is not enough for him merely to say, "My God, I offer this to your greater glory" (concomitant motive) for that deed to be actually performed because of this supernatural motive, since the concomitant motive has not determined that action, but has merely been added to the truly determining one. This addition is already something, of course, but it is not enough for that action to be strictly

supernatural, as it would be if the determining motive had been the glory of God and the other-that of one’s own taste-passed into the background as a concomitant motive. We cannot insist enough on the sovereign importance of constantly rectifying our intention so that the supernatural motives are those that determine our good works in an actual, or at least in a virtual, unretracted way, and are not limited to occupying only a secondary or concomitant role in relation to other less elevated motives, even if they are naturally good. 14 Cf. Karl Rahner, Writings on Theology vol.3 (Madrid 1961) p,i25-iS<>, where he explains these ideas at length, albeit with some inaccuracies.

Part Three

ASCETIC-MYSTICAL ASPECT OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

Having already examined the canonical and theological aspects of religious life, we will now turn to its ascetical-mystical aspect, that is, the spirituality proper to the religious state, which constitutes the most extensive and important part of our work. We remind the reader of what we already warned in our opening words “To the reader”. This work is complementary to another, more extensive one in which we set forth at length the great principles of Christian spirituality common to all the baptized. The one we now offer to religious can in no way substitute or supplant the former. What is truly basic and fundamental for anyone who aspires to sanctification, whether priest, religious or lay, must be sought in the elements common to all Christian spirituality. These elements are: Trinitarian indwelling, incorporation into Christ, sanctifying grace, the sacraments, the practice of the infused virtues, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, prayer, *etc.* We have spoken at length about all this in that other work, limiting ourselves in this one to gather, in a complementary way, the most important elements relative to the religious life, taking for granted all the other elements of the Christian life in general. No one should look for a complete treatise on Christian-religious spirituality in this work, for it has not been our intention to write it. It is a complement for religious, not a total panoramic vision of the life of perfection. Chapter I

OBLIGATION TO STRIVE FOR PERFECTION The principal obligation of anyone who has entered a religious order or

institute is to strive unceasingly for Christian perfection, which consists, as is well known, in the perfection of charity. This is, so to speak, the obligation1 Cf.

Theology of Christian perfection

4* ed. (BAC, Madrid 1962).

The professional profession of the religious, that which primarily and essentially characterizes him or her as such. In this chapter we will examine the theological reasons for this very serious obligation. But keeping in mind that the religious is, first and foremost, a Christian, and it may be the case that he is also a priest, we will examine the problem from this triple point of view, exposing the reasons that oblige him to strive for perfection as a Christian, as a religious, and as a priest. i.

Obligation as a Christian

104. It is a great error to think that Christian perfection is a matter proper to priests or religious. It also affects, and very seriously, all Christians by the mere fact of being baptized in Christ. We are going to prove it with all scientific rigor through the most important theological places. a) Sacred Scripture. In the Sermon on the Mount, addressing himself to all men, Jesus Christ pronounced these words: “Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:48).

From the context it is clear that these words refer directly and primarily to fraternal charity, of which the Lord speaks in the preceding verses. But it is no less certain that this evangelical formula is general: it can and should be applied

to all the other virtues, and therefore, in it, Christian perfection without limits or boundaries is inculcated in all of us, in imitation of the infinite perfection of the heavenly Father. The apostles insist on the command of their divine Master: St. Paul says that God has chosen us in Christ "that we should be holy and blameless before him" (Eph 1:4); that we must strive "until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, as perfect men, to the measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13), since it is the will of God that we should all be sanctified: "This is the will of God, your sanctification" (1 Thess 4:3). St. Peter wants us to be holy in everything, in imitation of God, who is holy: "According to the holiness of him who called you, be holy in everything, for it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Pet 1:15-16). St. John, in the Apocalypse, wants no one to consider himself so perfect that he can no longer be perfect: "Let the righteous still practice righteousness, and let the saint be more holy" (Rev 22:11).

The scriptural proof is, therefore, absolutely sure and firm. b) The Holy Fathers. The Christian tradition, whose maximum representatives are the Holy Fathers, fully confirms

This doctrine. The famous aphorism, so often quoted by the Fathers, "in the way of God, not to go forward is to go back", clearly expresses the necessity of always going forward on the path of Christian perfection, on pain of turning back and compromising our own salvation. c) The Magisterium of the Church. Recent Popes have repeatedly insisted on the obligation of all Christians to strive for perfection. Here are some texts: St. Pius X: "It has not been granted to all to embrace the religious life, which is the patrimony of a small

number. Pius XI: “No one can imagine that this precept (“Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect”) is addressed to a small group of chosen souls and that the others are allowed to remain in a lower degree of virtue. Pius XII: “According to the teachings of the Divine Master, the perfection of the Christian life consists in love of God and neighbor, but love that is truly fervent, diligent, active. If it has this quality, it can truly be said to comprise all the virtues, and can rightly be called the bond of perfection (Col 3:14). Therefore, in whatever state a man may find himself, to this end he must direct his intentions and his actions. “3 And elsewhere: “Although every Christian must tend to this sacred summit under the direction of the Church, the religious, however, tends to it by a path that is proper to him and by employing means of a higher nature. “4

The Second Vatican Council, in its Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, solemnly proclaimed this same doctrine. Here are its own words: “All the faithful, in whatever state or walk of life, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity, which is a form of holiness that promotes, even in earthly society, a more humane standard of living” 5. d) Theological reason. Here are two decisive arguments that affect all Christians without exception:

i. Baptismal grace is given to us in the form of a germ or seed, not in its full development and expansion. This means that, by its very nature or condition, baptismal grace is asking for a progressive growth until it reaches its full development, “according to the measure of the gift of Christ” (cf. Eph 1 St. Pius X, letter inter t*ravis$imas> of April 13, 1910, to Ja Superior General of the Society of the Daughters of St. Francis de Sales. 2 Pius XI, encyclical Rerum omnium, January 26, 1923. 3 Pius XII, encyclical Aentienti nostme, September 23, 1950. 4 Pius XII, to the General Congress of Religious Orders, Congregations, Societies and

Secular Institutes, December 8, 1950. 5 Second Vatican Council. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church c.5 n.40 Religious Life.

4:7), that is, “until we all attain to the unity of the faith in the knowledge of the Son of God, as perfect men, to the measure of the fullness of Christ” (cf. Eph. 4:13). This is Christian perfection. 2º According to the testimony of Christ himself, “the first and greatest of all the commandments is this: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (Mt 22:37-38). But since Christian perfection consists precisely in the perfection of charity, it follows that the same Christian perfection is precepted for everyone, not as something to be achieved at a given moment of life, but as an end to be aspired to and striven for throughout life itself.8 The simple Christian who consciously disregards the love of God in all its fullness and latitude, that is, the full perfection of charity, is a Christian who is not a Christian, but rather a Christian who is a Christian with a Christian who is a Christian with a Christian who is not a Christian, but a Christian with a Christian who is a Christian with a Christian who is a Christian with a Christian who is a Christian with a Christian who is a Christian. The simple Christian who consciously disregards the obligation to perfect himself would undoubtedly sin against the first and greatest of God’s commandments. However, as St. Thomas warns, in order not to seriously violate this precept, it is not necessary to possess charity in its maximum degree: it is enough to possess the minimum degree, “which consists in loving nothing more intensely than God, neither as much as Him,

nor against Him. Whoever does not have this degree of perfection, in no way fulfills the precept” 9. 2.

Obligation as a religious

To the general obligation to seek sanctification incumbent upon the religious as a simple Christian must be added the special obligation arising from his religious profession. By virtue of his profession, the religious officially commits himself before God to dedicate his whole life to divine service, striving unceasingly for the perfection of charity by the practice of the evangelical counsels-ratified by a vow-and of the other observances established in the rule and constitutions of his order. The tendency towards Christian perfection constitutes, so to speak, their principal professional duty. It is evident, therefore, that its voluntary nonobservance supposes a grave disorder, which all moralists qualify as a true mortal sin. St. Alphonsus Liguori says it expressly in his famous Moral Theology: “The religious who sins mortally 6 Cf. 2-2.184.3* 7 Cf. 2*2.184.1.

* Cf. Cajetan, fa 2-2 q.184 a3; Pasperinj, D&.statibus io 2-3,184,3. 9 Cf. 2-2,1843 ad 2.

The Church officially reminds all religious of this fundamental obligation in the Canon Code: “Each and every religious, both superiors and subjects, must not only fulfill the vows they have made faithfully and completely, but also order their lives in conformity with the rules and constitutions of their own religion, and thus strive for the perfection of their state” (cn. 593).

And in another canon he had warned that the perfection of their state is none other than evangelical perfection (en.488,1,°), for the acquisition of which they are obliged to keep, in addition to the common precepts, the evangelical counsels through the three vows of obedience, chastity and poverty (en. 487), This same obligation is evident from the fact that the religious is in a state of perfection which demands, by its very nature, that unceasing tendency towards Christian perfection. Let us listen to St. Thomas: "The state of perfection demands a perpetual obligation to those things that have to do with perfection, accompanied by a certain solemnity" 1 2, "For there to be a state of perfection, an obligation to those things that have to do with perfection is required" 3. "The state of perfection is realized only by a perpetual obligation to those things that have to do with perfection" 4.

However, it is necessary never to lose sight of the fact that the special obligation to sanctify oneself that weighs on the religious is an obligation of an unceasing tendency towards perfection, but not an obligation of actual exercise of that perfection. In fewer words: the religious is obliged to sanctify himselfff but not to be already a saint at a given moment of his life. St. Thomas luminously exposes this distinction in a multitude of passages. Here are his own words in the article dedicated to specifying whether all religious are obliged to observe all the counsels 5: "In three ways it can be something proper to perfection: a) Essentially, and in this way only the perfect fulfillment of the precepts of charity is proper, as we have already seen. b) As a consequence, and this is the case with everything that is presented as the fruit of perfect charity, such as blessing those who curse us, *etc.* The precept demands that the soul be ready to fulfill these things if the cir1 Here is the Latin text of the saint: "Peccat mortaliter religiosos qui firmiter statuit non tendere ad

perfectionem, vel nullo modo de ea curare” (Theol. Moralis 1 4 n.16). 2 2*2,184,5. 3 2*2,186,6.

4 De perfectione vitae spiritualis c.20. 5 2-2,186,2.

c) As a means and disposition, and thus poverty, chastity, abstinence, *etc.* belong to it. However, it is a sign of great charity that they are sometimes fulfilled even outside the case of necessity. c) As a means and disposition, and thus poverty, chastity, abstinence, *etc.* belong to it. Now then: we have said that the end of the religious state is the perfection of charity. The religious state is like an apprenticeship and exercise to attain perfection. It can be reached through various exercises, just as, in order to restore health, the doctor can use various medicines. It is evident that he who strives to attain an end is not obliged to possess it already*; what is required of him is that in one way or another he should strive to attain it. Consequently, he who embraces the religious state is not obliged to possess perfect charity, but to aspire to it and work to attain it. For the same reason, neither is he obliged to observe what is the fruit of perfect charity, although he should aspire to observe it. He goes against this who despises it; therefore, he does not sin if he does not observe it, but only if he despises it. Nor is he bound to all the exercises that lead to perfection, but only to those determined by the rule he has professed”.

In answering the objections, the Angelic Doctor rounds out this doctrine. Here are his own words: 1. “He who enters religion does not profess to be perfect, but to work to be so; just as he who enters a school does not profess to be wise, but to study in order to acquire science. That is why St. Augustine says that Pythagoras did not want to call himself a sage, but a “friend of wisdom”. Therefore, the religious

who is not perfect does not violate his profession, unless he does not care to attain perfection” (ad i), 2. However, there is a limit from which one cannot pass without sin, and another to which one can without sin not reach, as long as there is no contempt. Likewise, all, religious and laity, are obliged to do as much good as possible, for it is said to all: “Do perfectly all that is in your power” (Eccl 9:10). There is, however, a way of fulfilling this precept in such a way as to avoid sin, and that is to do what is possible within the limits of one’s state, provided that there is no disregard for more excellent works, which would dispose the soul against spiritual advancement” (ad 2). 3. “There are counsels which, if they were not observed, a man’s life would be totally submerged in secular affairs, such as having one’s own goods, the use of marriage, and other things contrary to the essential vows of religious life. Therefore, religious are obliged to observe these counsels. But there are others which refer to better but particular acts, which may not be observed, without this meaning mixing in secular business. Therefore, it is not necessary for religious to observe all these counsels” (ad 3).

The doctrine of the Angelic Doctor, as can be seen, could not be clearer and more transparent. But, for the sake of completeness, we gather below some of the most important ideas of a magnificent work of a theologian of our days on the obligation of the religious to tend unceasingly to Christian perfection6: <5

Marceltano Llamera, O.P. “Obligation of Perfection in the Religious State”.

C*1. Obligation to strive for perfection

1. “This is the secret and only meaning of vocation, and without this it is meaningless. Without aspiration and

decision for greater perfection, for more perfect divine love, the ideal of vocation is extinguished" (p. n). - 2. "How can it be doubted that the religious lives in a permanent obligation to perfect himself? How can he exonerate himself from the obligation to strive to be perfect, since God chose him and he accepted to be a religious in order to be one? (p,i2). 3; "Perfection is the professional duty of the religious. It is the dedication of his whole life. He lives to perfect himself" (p.i3)" 4, "The religious who desists from perfecting himself desists morally from being a religious. And, since he does not live the life he professes, he is a living lie 7. He professes perfection, has his whole old life dedicated to it, and lives without eagerness or effort to attain it. He is in the school of virtues and neglects to learn and assimilate them. She practices outwardly exercises of sanctification, but with a listless soul and disinterested in sanctity. It is the most feminine, the most absurd, the most wasted of lives" (p. 15). 5, "By this religious profession or obligation, man is denaturalized, unworldly, dehumanized: he emancipates himself from everything, overcomes everything, dispossesses himself, moreover, of himself and becomes religious, sacred, divine. Only by sacrilegious infidelity can he enslave himself to nothing and no one, or dispose of himself by himself, for he would violate the absolute right with which God possesses him" (p.i8), 6, "Man becomes religious in order to be perfect. He obliges himself to the religious life in order to force himself to seek the only, the pure, the perfect love of God" (p, zz), 7, "The end of the religious life is the total love of God, Without this aspiration to the perfection of divine love, this life is neither desired, nor accepted, nor maintained, nor fulfilled. To the extent that the enthusiasm for perfection wanes, religious life becomes lukewarm. If the yearning for holiness is extinguished, religious life crumbles. Only the divine love that causes it can sustain and strengthen it. Love is the breath, the strength, the life of that life. Without the ideal of

love it survives only by inertia. But it is life without life, it is apparent life, it is dead life. The appearances can still be many; the reality, without love, is none. The day when the religious disregards his perfection, he commits moral suicide. He lives without reason to live. And all for this reason: because the religious is a man who consecrates his whole life to God in order to love Him alone with all his heart" (p. 23). 8, "A perfect love is a unique, total and exclusive love. The enemies of love are loves. The obstacles to divine love are human or temporal loves. And these rival loves to God's love are three, because there are three kinds of goods that man can love: external goods, bodily goods or satisfactions, goods of his soul or will. The three evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience refer to the renunciation of these goods. To impose this renunciation on oneself is to free the heart to love God totally" (p. 24). "The man who wants to live only for God, who wants to love him fully and exclusively, has in the evangelical counsels the most upright and effective shortcut. Shortcuts of perfection, instruments of love. Without the will to perfect love, these shortcuts would be without end, without effect (Salamanca i$54)* It also appeared in the form of articles in the magazine La vida sobrenatural, between July 1952 and September 1953. 7 St. Thomas writes expressly: "He who embraces the state of perfection does not commit hypocrisy or falsehood by not being perfect, but by renouncing the desire for perfection* (2-2, 184,5 ad 2).

those instruments. Love is their only end. They are always useful for the better attainment of love, but they become necessary if one devotes one's life to its attainment" (p. 25). 9. "The true usefulness of the counsels, then, is the facilitation of divine love, inasmuch as they bring under their control the whole of human affectivity. This is a great

and inestimable service, the scope of which is not well understood when it is understood negatively, as a simple removal of obstacles, and not positively, as an information of the sensitive and rational affectivity of man by charity, through the virtues of poverty, chastity and obedience. St. Thomas assigns to the counsels the function of instruments of love. And this function is formal, not material. The instrument has no causality of its own, except insofar as it is moved by the influence of the principal cause. Poverty, chastity and obedience do not act, therefore, for themselves or for the ends connatural to their own condition; they are instruments at the service of love, at the service of its demands, which are measured by their end without measure: by their union and transformation in the infinite Good. Charity, then, mobilizes them with its superior influence to fully purify all the affections of the human heart, and to elevate and concentrate them more and more on God. The field of these virtues in the service of charity and under its divine rule extends limitlessly. Poverty, which begins with the stripping of material goods, advances inwardly, emptying the soul of every possession that possesses it, to leave it, in complete emptiness of spirit, in the sole possession of God. Chastity, which begins by detaching the heart from sensual passions, is not satisfied until it frees it from every natural taste of creatures in the absolute purity of the purest divine love. Obedience, which begins by subduing pride, subduing independence and muzzling selfishness, does not stop until it substitutes the human will for the divine will, surrendering it entirely to the sweetest lordship of the Spirit of love. This perfection of divine love, that is, the desire and decision to attain it, leads man to the acceptance of the evangelical counsels" (p. 28-29). 10. "All these facilities of sanctification that his state of life provides to the religious are as many titles of obligation that incite him to seek it. Why did he embrace these practices of sanctification if not because he wanted to oblige

himself to seek holiness? He professed and professes the rule of holiness in order to be a saint" (p. 35). 11. "As a rule, the religious is not only a religious in order to be holy, but also to be a sanctifier: to perfect himself and to perfect. But this fraternal charitable vocation, as an extension or consequence of the principal vocation, is always dependent on it. It is born from it, it is nourished by it, it is preserved by it, and it must result in its growth. The religious is an apostle at the impulse of divine love, which urges him and makes him go out of himself. He is, by essential definition, a person consecrated to God, and only as such can he understand in the irradiation of the divine. He must overflow with his divine fullness, illuminate with his light, set on fire with his fire. Its action, as St. Thomas teaches, must be the expansion of its contemplation. There is an activity," he says, "which is preferable to contemplation alone, and it is that which derives from his fullness. "s And all this is to say that the social mission of the religious, which is the divine perfection of men, has as its support and root his own personal perfection. Certainly, as a minister of the Lord or agent of the Church, he can give more good than he has, for he does not give of his own, 8 Cf. 2:2,188,6. St. Thomas himself warns very well: "When one is called from the contemplative life to the active life, it is not to subtract, but to add" (2,182,1 ad 3).

but transmits the divine. But this beneficent influence would not come about through him, but in spite of him, that is to say, in spite of the unworthiness with which he exercises it. On the other hand, because of the perfection of life that he professes, it should be his own and connatural perfection, as it is connatural to every being his own action: to fire to burn, to light to shine, to scent to perfume. What is connatural to the religious must be to religiosize others. He must perfect

in function of perfection; or, at least, in function of an ideal of perfection so highly valued and so intimately and sincerely desired, that it not only moves him to procure it for himself with all the truths of his soul, but to share it as much as he can with his poor brothers” (p. 36-3 7). 12. “It is therefore unquestionable that the religious must be profitable to others as a religious: as one who is totally and exclusively dedicated to the service of God, as a professional in the pursuit of perfection. From his own advantage will come the advantage of others. The success of his vocation and collective mission is inseparable from the success of his personal destiny, which is his own sanctification. How can it be supposed that, disregarding or neglecting his own advancement-the professed ideal of his life-he can burn with zeal for the faith? How can the sanctification of others move him so much who moves nothing or very little his own? How can he benefit others so much who does so little to benefit himself? It would be more accurate to judge, above all deceitful appearances, that sterile religious cannot be fruitful. Or let it be said, that he cannot be truly useful to others who is useless to himself” (p. 38). 13. “And this theology explains many sad religious stories, both individual and collective, because it explains the reason why, since there are so many to work and so much work, the fruit is so small and disproportionate. The vows, once professed, are no longer free means, but necessary means of perfection. The religious has committed himself to make use of their advantages in order to perfect himself more easily and better. A layman can be a saint without taking them; a religious cannot” (p. 42). 15. “But profession does not subtract the religious from the lordship of God, nor does God, by privileging him with a vocation, exempt him from fidelity to his Spirit. On the contrary, the purpose of vocation and of all the rules is none other than to make men more docile to divine inspirations, to subject them more easily to the reign of divine love. The religious would be the most

unfortunate of Christians if his rule were to dispense him from accepting and seconding the intimate demands of God. Why should God not demand of the religious more prayer, more recollection, more mortification, more work, etc., than his rule imposes? No one who has any notion or experience of what it is to be truly sanctified can doubt that the only total rule of the soul is the Spirit of God" 9 (p. 43-44). 16. "The mere fulfillment of the vows and other religious duties is not enough; what is needed is a fulfillment that is effective for holiness, that is to say, proportionate to the successive and ever greater demands of the spiritual advancement of the soul. One takes the vows and embraces the rule in order to become a saint. The religious must keep them in such a way that they effectively sanctify him. Unfortunately, it has been too often proven that there are many ways of keeping them and, therefore, of not substantially violating them, which do not produce the fruit of sanctification that was due. The ideal is not betrayed; but it is not served with the intrepidity that its conquest requires9 Cf. 1-2,106,1; 107,1 ad 2; Quodl. 1,14 ad 2; Meninoez-Reigaoa (Fr. Ignatius, O. P.), Los dones del Espíritu Santo y la perfección cristiana (Madrid 1948) p.2ioss.

ta. The will to holiness remains, but it is insufficiently fervent to keep the heart focused on God and to impose a life of constant fidelity. No great infractions are committed; but many small ones are committed and the exercises of virtue are practiced very reluctantly. The promptings of grace do not fail to solicit the generosity of the soul, but they do not find the necessary docility and are spoiled. If the religious becomes accustomed to disregarding the voice of God, his reaction becomes more difficult every day and he risks failing in the fundamental commitment of his life, which was sanctity" (p. 47). 17. "The sanctification of religious is,

therefore, the highest duty of every institute and of its members, and their greater or lesser spiritual efficacy depends principally on its fulfillment. If an institute, for any reason whatsoever, compromises or hinders the perfection of its religious, it betrays its highest duty and commits a grave injustice toward them. An institute which is not in a position to fulfill this highest end and duty, must either be trained or be suppressed" {p. 51). 18. "Do not admit or retain any subject who is not capable of religious perfection, or who does not clearly harbor or prove a sincere vocation to holiness and a determined will to attain it. Consequently, those incapable of faithfully keeping the vows and those who, because of their personal conditions of moral apathy, insubstantiality, lightness, etc., do not fulfill the demands of the religious ideal of perfection, are to be rejected. Mediocrity is incompatible with the religious vocation. If it invades the cloisters, it inevitably causes the decay of religious institutes, which, unable to support the dead weight of their mass of mediocrities, are lowered to their level. Never should a subject be admitted to profession who is unfit for the 'principal end,' which is sanctity, in view of his aptitude for the 'secondary end,' that is, for the activities proper to the institute" (p. 52). 19. "Religious institutes should adapt their apostolate as far as possible to the present needs of the world, but without detriment to their own life, and therefore insofar as it is compatible with its demands. The remedy does not lie in depriving religious of their advantages of sanctification, but in bringing to the world the benefit of their holiness" (p. 5ó). 20. "What the world needs above all from religious is holiness. The best means of increasing the efficacy of religious institutes is the flourishing in them of their life of perfection. If the desirable concentration of religious souls on God - the first and irreplaceable ideal of their state - were achieved, they would carry this poor materialized humanity with them on high" (p. 57).

The immortal pontiff Pius XII, in his apostolic constitution Sedes sapientiae, reminded religious of the very grave duty to sanctify themselves with these pressing words l0: “Let all those who by their state have consecrated themselves to acquire evangelical perfection remember and frequently think before God that it is not enough for them to fulfill the demands of their profession to avoid grave sins, nor even, with God’s help, venial faults, nor to obey materially the orders of their superiors, those of their vows and other obligations of conscience, nor.Nor those of their particular constitutions, according to which-as the Church ordains in her sacred canons-“each and every religious, both superiors and subjects, must.... order their lives and thus tend to the perfection of their state” (can. 593).

Cf. Pius XII, Sedes sapientiae n.24.

For all this they must do with their whole heart and fervent love, not only out of necessity but also out of conscience (cf. Rom 13:5); for in order to rise to the heights of holiness and to be able to offer themselves to all as living sources of Christian charity, they must be devoured by an ardent love of God and neighbor and filled with virtue.”

3.

Obligation as priests

Priesthood and religious life are two completely different things. The latter requires perfect consecration to God through the vows of the evangelical counsels. The priesthood, on the other hand, requires only the reception of the sacrament of Holy Orders, which not all religious receive,

and certainly not any religious. The priesthood is thus a new title, entirely independent of religious profession, which carries with it grave and special duties of sanctification for the Christian who has received it, whether or not he is a religious, whether or not he belongs to a canonical state of perfection. Three are the principal titles that underlie the special obligation that the priest has to strive for perfection, added to the general obligation he has as a Christian and to the special obligation he may already have as a religious or member of a state of perfection. a)

The same priestly ordination

Priestly ordination is, in itself, much nobler than religious profession; not only because it is a sacrament that produces grace by itself-ex opere operato-but also because it imprints on the one who receives it the priestly character, which configures him to Christ the Priest and makes him a full participant in his priesthood. This carries with it a higher demand for holiness than that which comes from religious profession. Let us listen to St. Thomas h “For the worthy exercise of orders, not just any goodness suffices, but eminent goodness (bonitas excellens) is required; so that just as those who receive orders are placed in a higher degree than the multitude, so they may be superior in holiness”.

This with regard to the laity. Let us now see what he says with regard to non-priestly religious 1 2: “If the religious has no order, it is evident that the cleric is superior in dignity, since by sacred ordination he is consecrated to the most dignified ministries, in which he serves the 1 Suppí.

35.1 ad 3.

2 2-2,184,8.

Christ himself in the sacrament of the altar, which demands an interior holiness greater than that demanded by the religious state. This is why Dionysius says: “The monastic order must follow the priestly orders and elevate itself to divine things, imitating them”. And so, all things being equal, the sin of the one ordained “in sacris”, when he does something against sanctity, is more serious than the sin of the simple religious without orders. It always remains, however, that the non-clerical religious is bound to regular observances, to which clerics are not bound.”

Priestly ordination, therefore, carries with it a greater demand for holiness than religious profession. For this reason, at the end of the rite of ordination, the bishop says to those he has just ordained as priests: “My dear sons, consider carefully the ordination you have received and the burden placed on your shoulders. Strive to live holy and religiously and to please God, so that you may obtain his grace. May he, in his mercy, deign to grant it to you.” b)

Ministry over the sacramental Body of Christ

Garrigou Lagrange 3 writes, “The priest-celebrant represents Christ, he is another Christ. Christ offered himself for us as a victim” Therefore, if his minister is to be conscious of his ministry, in order to celebrate it worthily and holily he must unite himself with mind and heart to the supreme Priest and most holy Victim. It would be hypocrisy, at least indirectly willed by his negligence, to approach the altar without a firm will to grow in holiness. Every day he must say more holily in the name of Christ: “This is my body. This is the chalice of my blood”. At each Mass, too, he must devoutly receive

Eucharistic Communion in order to grow more and more in charity. Normally, then, each Eucharistic communion should be substantially more fervent and fruitful, since each communion should not only preserve charity, but increase it, thus disposing us to better receive the body of Christ the next day. If this is true for the simple faithful, it is equally true for the priest”.

On the other hand, the recitation of the breviary-the official prayer of the Church to which clerics are obliged from the subdeaconate onwards-must be done “worthily, attentively and devoutly” in the name of all the faithful people” It is like a prolongation of the prayer of Christ, just as the Holy Mass is a prolongation of the sacrifice of Calvary. The priest will not be able to pray his breviary properly without a constantly renewed yearning for perfection and holiness.” c)

Priestly ministry over the Mystical Body of Christ

In addition to his relationship with the real Body of Christ through the sacrament of the Eucharist, the priest is in intimate relationship with the members of his Mystical Body, to whom he must instrumentally transmit the immense benefits of the sacrament of the Eucharist and the sacrament of the Eucharist.

C2. The rule and the constitutions

of the redemption. The administration of the Eucharist demands of the priest great holiness and purity of life in order to treat so holy a sacrament in a holy manner: sancta, sánete. Penance requires exquisite prudence, great charity, gentleness and sweetness in the treatment of souls. The preaching of the divine word must spring from the depths of the heart if it is to be anything more than a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal (cf. I Cor 13:1). The spiritual direction of

certain chosen souls cannot be properly carried out by the priest if he does not know theoretically and practically, by his own personal experience, the ways of God in the sanctification of souls. The Council of Trent expressly declared in this regard 4: “There is nothing that more assiduously incites to piety and the worship of God than the life and example of those who have given themselves to the divine ministry. In them others look as in a mirror; from them they take what they are to imitate. For this reason it is so necessary that the clerics, called to be the selection of the Lord, in their walk, in their speech, in all other things, manifest nothing that is not serious, moderate and full of religious sense”.

For all these reasons it is evident that the priest, whether he is a religious or not, is obliged by very special titles to strive unceasingly for the highest Christian perfection.

Chapter 2

THE RULE AND THE CONSTITUTIONS In order to guide and lead their members along the path of perfection, the founders of religious orders have given them a rule, constitutions or both. The Church, by approving these rules or constitutions, has “canonized” them, that is, has given them official validity and has infallibly guaranteed their suitability or aptitude to lead to Christian perfection all those who observe them properly. Pope John XXII could say without exaggeration: “Give me a religious who has been faithful all his life to his rule and constitutions and I canonize him without further examination”. Let us study this very important point in detail. First of all, we will point out the difference between rules and constitutions. Then we will speak of the excellence of the rules, of the duties they impose, of their obligatory character, of their habitual transgression, of the customs and, finally, of the exquisite fidelity with which the religious must practice their rule and constitutions.

4 1

Session 22 c.i. Throughout this chapter, we quote verbatim, with a few touches, the precious little work Tratado

P.III. The ascetic’tntstic aspect of religious life

i*

Difference between rule and constitutions

107* The word rule, in the canonical sense, designates the norm of life imposed on the religious so that he may more effectively strive for perfection. The Church officially

recognizes only four rules properly so called: Those of St. Basil, St. Augustine, St. Benedict and St. Francis of Assisi. In 1215, St. Dominic was in Rome on the occasion of the fourth Lateran Council, a circumstance that seemed propitious for him to obtain from the Holy See the approval of the order he proposed to found; but his efforts were frustrated by the decision of the Council to oppose, in principle, the foundation of new orders, to put a stop to the diversity of reformers, some of whom were disturbing the Church at the time. Pope Innocent III suggested to St. Dominic that he avoid the difficulty by placing his undertaking under the protection of one of the four ancient approved rules. The saint chose that of St. Augustine, to which were later added in the form of an appendix the peculiar dispositions of the Order of Preachers, which were approved by bull in 1216. For several centuries the new founders imitated the example of St. Dominic. They chose, as he did, one of the monastic rules and completed it with additions and special regulations, according to the particular end they intended. Such additions, called constitutions, specified the government, the habit, the spiritual exercises, the occupations, etc., and differentiated among themselves the diverse religious families born of the same rule.

The rule is a very general code that can apply to many institutes; on the other hand, the characteristic of constitutions is that they apply exclusively to a particular religious institute. The ancient orders (the orders properly so called) canonically have rules and constitutions, and their members, by reason of following one of the four approved rules, are called regulars by the canonical code. An order may not have adopted any of the ancient rules, as is the case with many of those founded after the sixteenth century: the Jesuits, for example. In such a case, the constitutions take the place of the rule. But in common parlance, the terms rules and constitutions are used

interchangeably, as a set of ordinances that govern each religion and give it its own physiognomy. breve del estado religioso, written by the Brothers of the Christian Schools and published by Ja Editorial Bruño (Madrid 1961) n.rajss. -

2. Rule 108 excellence.

It can be deduced from the following considerations:

r.a. The rule is for the religious the principal instrument of sanctification, since it points out to him with certainty at every moment the will of God. By embracing, so to speak, the whole of life and every moment of the day, it places the religious in the fortunate necessity of exercising continual abnegation and provides him with the most effective means of growing in all the virtues. Its complete observance crowns the sacrifice that the religious made to God by the emission of the vows.

2. a The rule is the wall that preserves the religious from many dangers and frees him from not a few temptations. 3. a The rule is the best means of preserving the common life; by it, charity, fervor, and religious discipline are maintained in the houses. 4. a The rule assures the unity of spirit and methods to the institutes, a unity which maintains its peculiar physiognomy throughout time and space, and in spite of the superiors who succeed one another in government. 5. a The rule is to the institute what the soul is to the body. It infuses life into the various generations of religious who succeed one another in it; notwithstanding differences of nationality, language, and race, they all acquire a certain common resemblance which enables them to recognize each other as brothers, sons of the same family.

6. a The rule protects the institute as a whole, because, properly observed, it assures its prosperity. 3.

Duties imposed by the rule and constitutions

109. The religious must, in regard to his rule and constitutions: i. Know them in their text and in their spirit. For this purpose a copy is given to each novice and explained to him in detail during the novitiate..... According to the Canonical Code (cn. 509), at least once a year, on the appointed days, the constitutions of the religion are to be read in public. The spirit of the rules is to be penetrated by reading the writings of the holy Founder and the circulars of the Superiors General.

2.0

Estimate them, since:

a) They have their principle in God, since He inspired them to the founder and sanctioned them with the supreme authority of the Church, its official interpreter.

b) They contain all that is necessary for our sanctification and, in fact, by simply observing them, many days souls have reached perfection. 3.0 To love them, since they are for the religious an abundant source of graces and merits and an authentic expression of the will of God. 4.0 To observe them faithfully, otherwise their knowledge, esteem, and love would be of no use. To observe them: a) For love of God, in a spirit of filial obedience and not out of fear or any other less noble motive. b) With exactitude, fulfilling what they prescribe in the precise time, place and manner; observing their dispositions, both the most important and those of lesser importance, for if not everything in the rules has the

same importance, everything is good, useful and sanctifying. c) With generosity, not shrinking back for fear of the efforts and inevitable sacrifices that they impose, nor turning aside from observance because of the false pretexts of nature, nor allowing themselves to be influenced by the example of lax religious, nor requesting a dispensation except when it is absolutely necessary.

It is not to be feared that the rules, with their meticulous prescriptions, suppress or hinder the religious's own initiative. On the contrary, by helping him to see at every moment and with certainty what he can do best, and to proceed in it for the noblest motives, they stimulate him to use his own resources for the glory of God (to whom he owes himself without reserve), for his own sanctification and for the good of souls. In the exercise of the apostolate, the rules offer him a sufficiently broad and flexible field where he can deploy all the industries of zeal without being diverted, since everything is channeled to perfection as a single end. In short, rules are to the religious what wings are to birds or rails are to trains. Just as the vows, as has already been said, do not hinder human freedom, so neither do rules constitute an obstacle to true and prudent initiative. The example of such a large number of religious who were very faithful to the observance and at the same time displayed marvelous activity amply proves it. 4*

Mandatory nature of the rule

no. Fulfillment of the rule is a duty for all religious: "Each and every religious, both superiors and inferiors' must not only fulfill fully and faithfully the vows they have taken, but also order their life in conformity with the rules and constitutions of their own institute, and in this way aspire to the perfection of their state" (011.593). - ' ■

C.2. The rule and constitutions

The superior, in virtue of the dominative power, founded on the donation of the religious to his institute, can impose penances for the faults against the rule. If the penance is imposed in the true sense of the word (for example, in the case of a grave infraction), the offender is obliged in conscience to accept and fulfill it. If the rule obliges, it is not by virtue of the vow of obedience. In fact, the religious does not vow to observe the rule, but to obey according to the rule; which means not that the religious fails to observe the vow by infringing it, but that the superior has the power to command in virtue of the vow everything that is in conformity with the rule, In other words, the matter of the vow is rather the obedience promised to the superiors than the rule itself. The obligatory force of the latter comes from the fact that it is like the law of the institute to which the religious belongs, a law that emanates from legitimate authority. The binding force of the rules is not the same in all religions. Thus, certain prescriptions which among the Franciscans and Benedictines are obligatory under pain of grave sin, are obligatory only for venial sin among the Carmelites. In most orders (Dominicans, Jesuits, etc.) and in all congregations of simple vows, the rules and constitutions do not bind as such, that is, by themselves, only on pain of sin, but only to accept the deserved penance in case of transgression.

If obedience to the rules is not generally imposed under pain of sin, it is due to the following reasons: 1. a Their perfect and constant observance appears to be heroic, and for this reason the legislator prudently did not want them to be obligatory in conscience; otherwise, for fervent religious with a timorous conscience, it would be a source of fear and anxiety, and for unobservant religious, a continual occasion for faults.

2. a Since the religious state is a state of perfection, it is preferable that the rules be observed out of love and not by force; this will also increase the merit of the religious. The principle, too often invoked by imperfect or lax religious, that the rule does not oblige under pain of sin, should not, however, be interpreted too naively. It would be much more accurate to say that the rule has many articles that do not oblige to sin, while others impose an obligation of conscience.... The constitutions cannot dispense from things that are obligatory by natural or positive law, but only from the second sin that would be committed if those same things were obligatory also by virtue of the constitutions.

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The Sacred Congregation for Religious now requires that new constitutions expressly declare that their prescriptions are not binding under pain of sin; without this requirement they will not obtain pontifical approval.

PJII. Ascetic-mythical aspect of religious life

There are, however, many rules that cannot be violated without sin, and sometimes without grave sin. Such are: a) Those that determine the matter of the vows 3. b) Those that refer to duties that oblige every Christian under sin, such as the commandments of God and of the Church and many virtues (charity, humility, etc.). c) Those that coincide with prescriptions of divine, natural or positive law, or of the Code of Canon Law4. d) Those that prescribe something under a formal precept (formulas such as these are usually used: “We command in the vows that we shall not violate the vows without sin. d) Those that prescribe something under formal precept (formulas such as these are usually used: “We command in virtue of holy obedience, of the Holy Spirit, under formal precept”, etc.) or in imperative form (they are

discovered in formulas such as these: it is strictly forbidden, it will never be tolerated, in no case will it be allowed, etc.). The knowing violation of a formal precept always supposes mortal sin.

The other norms, that is, the merely disciplinary ones, theoretically do not bind under sin. But the following should be noted: 1. They are obligatory for the penalty that the superior imposes for their transgression, 2. 3.0 They will never be violated without ‘positive imperfection, that is, without manifest infidelity to grace and to the declared will of God, who does not strictly command that, but proposes and asks it as something absolutely convenient to obtain the end of the religious life, which is the glory of God and one’s own sanctification. These positivist imperfections, even supposing that they are not venial sins in themselves (contrary to what serious authors affirm), can paralyze the sanctifying action of the Holy Spirit in a soul and frustrate the very end of religious life in relation to that particular soul.

In practice, then, even when the rules do not directly bind the conscience, except in the cases mentioned above, the one who knowingly violates them almost always sins, as theologians say, at least by reason of the motive for the violation: sensuality, laziness, impatience, self-love, curiosity, *etc.* Moreover, he can easily sin by reason of the scandal or disedification he causes, especially if the offenses are committed in the presence of young religious, or if they endanger religious discipline, a priceless treasure of communities and institutes. 3 The rules which determine the matter of the vows of poverty and chastity are as binding as the vows themselves. As for the vow of obedience, the constitutions determine its scope, inasmuch as they all constitute the remote matter of the vow, a matter which becomes immediate when the precept of the superior

intervenes. Therefore, all the constitutions become obligatory in conscience if they are legitimately imposed by the superior (cf. Tábera, The Law of Religious 4-a ed. p. 27). … 4 Then the obligation arises from the same law, divine or ecclesiastical, without the constitutions adding any new obligation. Note the great number of norms that will be obligatory by this chapter, because the prescriptions of common law scattered throughout the constitutions are very numerous. Hence the importance of knowing canon law in order to know how to distinguish the norms that are only constitutional from those that are canonical (cf. Tabera, o.c. p.27).

C.2, The rule and constitutions

5.

Formal disregard of the rule

ni. All authors agree that the violation of the rule or of the constitutions is a grave sin when it is done in formal contempt of the superior or of the rule itself. Now, what is meant by formal contempt? Let us listen to the Angelic Doctor 5: Contempt implies a transgression or omission when the will of the transgressor refuses to submit to the prescriptions of the law or the rule, and this rebellion impels him to act against them, But when it is a particular motive, such as concupiscence, anger, etc., that impels one to do something against the prescriptions of the law or the rule, there is no sin of contempt, although one falls frequently and for the same motive in the fault. Thus, St. Augustine says that not all sins are committed out of contempt born of pride. However, the repetition of the fault disposes to contempt, for it is written: “When the wicked has reached the end of his sin, he falls into contempt” (Prov 18:3).

The formal contempt can be of two ways: perfect and imperfect. It is perfect when the authority itself of the superior who commands is despised. It would incur in this contempt the subject who would say, rebelling against the legitimate superior: “I do not want to obey, I do not recognize his authority over me”. And the formal contempt would be imperfect if it fell, not on the authority of the superior who commands (which is recognized and accepted), but on the thing commanded or prescribed in the rule, not wanting to obey it precisely because it is commanded. In both cases a mortal sin is committed, but more serious in the first case than in the second. Formal disregard is all the more serious the higher the authority that is disregarded and the more serious the precept or command that is broken. It should be noted that violations of the rule-frequent, unfortunately, on the part of certain religious-involve, however, rarely the formal contempt of which we speak. To say that such a rule is unimportant, untimely, outdated, and not to observe it for that reason, is not “formal contempt”, but material, which usually does not go beyond a slight sin. However, the fault could be serious and border on formal contempt if it were intended to drag others to the same infraction, trying to convince them that the article that is broken is something puerile, and does not deserve, therefore, any attention.

Note, moreover, that the violation of the rule, of the Constitutions or of a simple order of the superior always constitutes a violation of the rule, of the Constitutions or of a simple order of the superior.

pre mortal sin, when a real formal precept falls upon any of these things

6.

Habitual transgression of rules

ii2” The infractions, even frequent, of the rules do not necessarily imply their formal disregard. They may be caused by a temperament naturally independent or prone to laxity, which is not incompatible with esteem for the rules and with a certain love of vocation. But even if the faults fall on merely disciplinary articles, they easily become a source of venial sins, since, as we have said, the conscious breaking of the rules is rarely free from some fault. It weakens the vigor of the soul, familiarizes it with evil, deforms the conscience, makes it insensitive to remorse, and easily leads to a serious and very dangerous state of lukewarmness that can border on “formal contempt” and, consequently, on grave sin. Moreover, to habitually break the rules is to make the fulfillment of the vows very difficult and, therefore, to compromise perseverance in the vocation. It should also be added that the religious who frequently violates the rules can cause serious harm to the community, being in it for many a cause of laxity, and thus incurring grave responsibility. For there to be a habitual transgression of the rules, it is not necessary to break most of the articles: it is enough that the prescriptions considered important by superiors and good religious are systematically not observed, e.g., those that determine the daily exercises of piety, the hour of rising, the caution to be kept in relations with persons of the other sex, the principal obligations concerning poverty, and other similar ones. Obligation to inform superiors. When someone witnesses certain transgressions of the rule which, by their nature, can cause serious harm to the community or to the institute, he should inform the local superior, if the latter is not already informed; and if the fault is of exceptional gravity, he has the obligation to inform the major superior. To remain silent

in such circumstances would be to show a culpable indifference to the good of his brothers and of the order or congregation, and one could easily incur grave sin.

The religious who breaks the rules by forgetfulness, inadvertence or surprise, commits only a material fault; but even so, he is obliged to fulfill the penance that the superior may impose on him.

C.2. The rule and constitutions

211

If anyone has a legitimate reason for not conforming in a given case or at a given time to the strict observance of some disciplinary point of the rule which is not otherwise a sin, e.g., for reasons of impediment or to procure a greater good, and especially for reasons of charity, he does not commit a fault. But in such cases he should proceed with great prudence, according to the example of good religious; he should, if he can, bring it to the attention of the superior beforehand, and if he cannot, he should give him an account of it afterwards.

7.

Customs

113. Custom, that is, general practice which is not included in the constitutions, but which is not opposed to them either, can and should be followed if it is legitimate. For it to be so, it must fulfill the following conditions: a) That it be reasonable or praiseworthy, b) That it not be opposed to the rule or the constitutions, but that it be apart from them, that is, compatible with them, c) That it be followed by the majority of the religious with the express or tacit consent of

the superiors, d) That it has reached the legal time for its legitimate prescription.

The Canon Code establishes the following concerning customs: Canon 27, “No custom has the force to derogate in any way from divine law, whether natural or positive; nor does it prevail against ecclesiastical law if it is not rational and has been lawfully prescribed for forty consecutive and complete years, But against ecclesiastical law in which a clause prohibiting future customs is contained, only a reasonable custom which is centuries old or immemorial can prescribe. A custom which the law expressly reproves is not rational”. Canon 28. “A custom outside of law1 which has been knowingly observed by a community with the intention of binding itself becomes law, provided that it is both rational and has been legitimately prescribed for forty consecutive and complete years.

Canon 29 says that “custom is the best interpreter of the law”. It is a matter of custom according to law, that is, of that which is introduced not with the intention of modifying the law, but with the intention of fulfilling it and interpreting it properly. 2. Any custom which is opposed to the particular purpose of one’s own religious order or institute, to the fundamental duties of religious life, such as the vows and principal observances, or which has been introduced by religious who are lax or censured by major superiors (even if it has been tolerated or even encouraged by the immediate superior), must be considered abusive and, therefore, illegitimate.

1 Out of law-praeter legem-means outside the law, but not contrary to the law. It is something that is neither commanded nor forbidden by the law or by the constitutions, but is superadded to them. 1 Cf. Code of Canon Law, ed. BAC, commentary on canon 2Q.

8.

Fidelity to observance

114. 1. It is to be noted that fidelity to the rules of one's own institute constitutes the common character of all holy religious. Not a single one will be found in whom there does not shine forth scrupulous vigilance, inspired by the filial love of God, to observe the rules with exactitude. Fully convinced that these are the most genuine expression of the will of God, they see in them the means par excellence for arriving at the perfection of charity, which is the end of religious life. 2. The religious, in virtue of the commitments of his profession, should consider observance as the normal, necessary means of arriving at sanctity, but should be careful not to limit himself to mere feelings of esteem and respect for the rules, without believing himself bound by the minuteness of their prescriptions. Such an attitude would be illogical and illusory. It is true that one has not entered religious life to practice a rule, but to give oneself to God, and the religious can never be too much on guard against mechanical and routine observance, which is nothing more than sterile conformism. But while the spirit must prevail over the letter, there is no reason to disregard regular practices: they are indispensable for the spirit to become concrete and take shape, since the spirit without a body would be pure chimera. The love of God, on which we must principally base and maintain ourselves, is not presented to us in a bare form, but clothed in all the regular prescriptions, each of which, by requiring the renunciation of ourselves and giving preference to the divine will over our own will and whim, nourishes the love of God and increases it, at the

same time that charity vivifies all these observances and gives them supernatural and sanctifying value. 3. If it is necessary that the formation of beginning religious be based on a solid and enlightened love of God, it is no less necessary that they be inculcated with the cult of observance in its entirety and in the most excellent and least subject to illusions that can be given to manifest the love of God. It is the imperative duty of major and local superiors to watch solicitously over the maintenance of regularity, in order to promote the greater good of each of their subjects and the surest benefit of the communities and of the entire institute.

C3. Regular compliance

213

Chapter 3

REGULAR OBSERVANCE 115. This chapter is closely related to the preceding one, to which it is a mere complement. Its purpose is none other than to insist with new arguments on the necessity of observing to the last detail the sacred commitments which the religious has contracted before God. These commitments are principally centered on the obligation to fulfill one's own rule and constitutions down to their most insignificant details: usque ad mínima. This fulfillment, as a whole, constitutes regular observance. St. Teresa was distressed by the evils that were raining down on the Church because of Luther's rebellion and wished to give her life for the salvation of so many poor lost souls: "From here I also gained the great sorrow that I feel for the many souls that are condemned, especially these Lutherans, because they were already members of the Church by baptism, and the great impetus to take advantage of souls, which seems to me that to free just one from such great torments I would gladly die many deaths" *.

With his good sense and the light he received so abundantly from God in prayer, he soon found the path he had to take to oppose so many evils and procure the salvation of souls: "I thought about what I could do for God, and I thought that the first thing was to follow the call that His Majesty had made me to religion, keeping my rule with the greatest perfection I could" 2.

This was the origin of the Carmelite reform. The religious has no other way if he wants to be faithful to his privileged vocation and fulfill the highest apostolic mission to which the very will of God destines him. The religious is a professional of Christian perfection. But let us never forget

that, although Christian perfection consists essentially in the perfection of charity, the religious can never attain this summit except by using as means the practice of the vows and the exact fulfillment of the rule and constitutions of his order. Holiness, one in essence for all Christians, offers infinite nuances in its concrete realization. It is different* St. Teresa, Life c.32 n.6. 2 St. Teresa, ibid. n.9.

The modality that it must have, for example, in a priest, a religious and a lay person, is very different. Within the religious state, each religious family imprints special characteristics on the spiritual perfection of its children. It is a matter of a permanent way of seeing, loving and feeling. The Benedictine and the Dominican, for example, wear in their specific ideals, as members of their own order, colors as different as those of their habits. The same vows, substantially identical for all religious, offer a great variety of nuances in the manner of observing them. What is the reason for this great accidental diversity among religious orders and congregations within their substantial unity, stemming from the identical end to which they are all directed? The rule and constitutions proper to each religious family give us the key to this diversity. In them is “incarnated and perpetuated the spirit of their holy founder, a living ideal for all his children. The religious will reach the summit of his ideal by walking in the footsteps of his holy founder and legislator, through the perfect observance of his rule and constitutions, his counsels and his spirit. But there is a great diversity of degrees in the way of observing the rule and constitutions of one’s own order. From the minimalist observance of the lukewarm and superficial religious who is content to avoid serious transgressions, with

little or no concern for a thousand details that he considers "trifling" and "proper to novices"-forgetting that the Gospel commands the observance of the law even in its smallest details: iota unum aut unus apex (Mt 5:18)-to the exquisite delicacy of the saints, who are like a living embodiment of his rule and constitutions, there are many intermediate degrees in the observance of the fundamental laws of religious life. We offer the reader below a summary, as complete as possible, of the best work we know of on the cult and observance of the rule, which does not dispense with the direct and complete reading of those precious pages 3. 1.

The spirit and the letter

The worship of God, which constitutes the very object of the virtue of religion, must be both internal and external. But the external has no religious value if it does not spring from the 3 Cf. Colín, C. SS. R., El culto de la reída (Madrid 1946)* We summarize as far as possible using the author's own words.

It would be a body without a soul, a real corpse, a ridiculous parody" 2" The worship of the rule, like the worship of God, must be internal and external; but the latter must flow from the former: The perfect observance of the rule provoked, sustained and vivified by trust and love for it, 3, What the soul is to the body, so is the internal worship in relation to the external" Religious life is a state of the soul rather than an external discipline" The value of observance depends less on the rigor than on the spirit with which it is observed. The external cult of the rule, without the internal cult of the

same, is nothing more than mere automatism, often cowardly hypocrisy and always sterility. The authentic religious, far from acting like an automaton moved by the ringing of a bell, is a soul who understands and loves his rule and takes pains to keep it, precisely because he knows it, loves it and is determined to keep it for love of God and the holiness to which it leads him” 2.

Faith in the rule

117, It is necessary to consider the rule, not in the light of mere natural reason, but in the light of faith. If faith in God constitutes the foundation of the Christian life, must not faith in the rule be the foundation of the religious life? Without this essence, both would collapse” Both rest and rest on faith. From where do ignorance, forgetfulness, false interpretations of the rule and of the constitutions spring? From where does the boredom, the carelessness-which at times borders on scandal-in regular observance come from? The primary origin is almost always to be sought in the lack of faith. The violation of the rule, as well as sin, is a dark work consummated in darkness or in a momentary eclipse of the light. a)

Sanctity of the rule

118. The rule is holy by its origin, by its nature and by its sanctifying efficacy. - i” By its origin: At the origin of all religious legislation we always find God, the Church and often the soul of a saint: the founder or foundress. 4 Cf. 1-2,101,2”.

a) Dros, “There is no doubt that these illustrious men, in founding their institutes, have done nothing more than obey a divine inspiration” (Pius XI). b) The Church. By definitively approving an order or religious congregation, the pope infallibly proclaims its timeliness and the aptitude of its legislation to lead its members to Christian perfection, which is the most immediate and proximate end of all of them. This definitive approval constitutes a kind of spiritual baptism, by which the new institute enters the bosom of the Church, becoming one of her chosen and holy members. c) The Founder. Inspired by the Holy Spirit and approved by the Church, some rules or constitutions have, in addition, the inestimable advantage of having been planned and written by a saint, a third flourish that must add to the nobility of their origin. How these rules reflect the genius of the founder and how they exhale at the same time, throughout the centuries, the aroma of his holiness! What is the most precious of his relics worth in comparison with the rule or constitutions bequeathed to his sons and daughters? What is the value of his bones turned to dust, where the soul no longer lives, being in possession of the rule, in which he put and remains forever the best of his genius and his whole heart, a burning flame of charity?

2. By nature. Holiness of origin necessarily entails holiness of nature. Being as it is the work of God, of the Church and of the holy Founder, can it fail to be in itself a masterpiece of holiness? It is, in fact, for three chapters, or for a triple reason: a) It is the Gospel in compendium and substance: “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Mt 16:24). “If you would be perfect, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and then come, follow me” (Mt. 192:1). In these two maxims is enclosed the whole substance of the Gospel; and these are precisely what the religious puts into practice when he fulfills his rule and constitutions. b) He is THE INFALLIBLE

Can there be anything holier than this divine will, the supreme rule of all morality and perfection? Is perfection and even simple morality possible against or outside the will of God? The rule is the spiritual ark that guards the incorruptible manna of the divine good will. The rule is God who speaks, commands, forbids and manifests his desires. Not a page, not a line that does not come from God and is a certain expression of His most holy will. That is why it is very difficult to violate without reason any point of the rule, no matter how insignificant it may seem, without committing a real sin; because in transgressing the rule, we act on the impulse of our self-love and we depart from the express will of God. c) It is the irradiation of Jesus Christ, of his thought, of his heart, of his soul, of his holiness. A congregation-and the rule, which is its soul-because it belongs to the Church, forms part of Jesus Christ and constitutes one of his chosen and holy members. This Christological and ecclesial sense is inseparable from every religious rule: Christ and the Church fill it completely.

From this sublime doctrine it is evident that every religious is under a very serious obligation, not only to

not to judge, criticize or belittle their rule or constitutions - which would constitute a kind of sacrilege - but to venerate, respect and love them with all their heart. It is a pious custom to kiss the rule, as one kisses the Gospel, seeing in both books the most authentic expression of the word and will of God. Great was the faith of that venerable religious who could not hear “the rule” without immediately saying: “No, the holy rule”.

3. Because of its sanctifying efficacy. We will see this in the following number-confidence in the rule-when we speak of the certainty of attaining sanctity through the observance of the rule and of the great dangers of its nonobservance. b)

Authority of the rule

119, In religious orders, the rule is an authority, or rather, the supreme authority and the sovereign master. Authority that flows from the very nature of the rule as an expression of the very will of God. It is a strict and permanent universal authority. 1, Universal authority. This universality is to be understood in two senses: the whole rule, even in its smallest details; and the whole rule for all, subjects and superiors. a) The whole rule, from the first to the last of its prescriptions, however small some of them may seem. Everything is obligatory, because everything is God's will. b) For all religious, without any exception whatsoever. The Church recalls it with energy in her official Code: "Each and every religious, both superiors and subjects, must not only fulfill faithfully and integrally the vows they have made, but also order their life in conformity with the rule and constitutions of their own religion, and in this way tend to the perfection of their state") (en.593). The superior must be the first slave of the rule, because of the grave obligation to give example that weighs on him. Strict authority. In general, the rule and the constitutions, directly and by themselves, do not bind under pain of sin, because most of them expressly declare it so. But, as moralists commonly affirm, in practice, to break without just and proportionate cause any disciplinary disposition can very rarely be done without incurring at least venial sin, by culpable carelessness, laziness, negligence, bad example given, *etc.* The sin would become mortal if the breach of that

disciplinary disposition was made out of disregard or was based on a formal precept of the superior5. 3. Permanent authority. Superiors, and with them their mandates, pass and change; but the rule does not change, and its prescriptions remain unalterable and intangible. The rule binds all religious always and everywhere - semper et ubique - inside and outside the house, day and night, in public and in private, until death. The religious may sometimes abstain from the authority of the superior, but never from that of the rule. Woe to the religious who needs the vigilance of the superior to remain within the limits of observance! Is there any greater proof of a lack of authenticity, of a naturalistic spirit, of a total absence of delicacy of conscience and even of simple human honesty? The rule is the unbreakable framework in which religious life is framed, and no one is allowed to deviate from it for a day, not even for a minute. 3.

Confidence in the rule

120. Confidence, the second element of the internal cult of the rule, is nothing more than the natural extension of faith in the sanctity and authority of the rule. The two fundamental aspects of this confidence are certainty and fear. Certainty: to expect everything from the observance of the rule. Fear: to fear everything from the nonobservance of the rule. a)

The certainties of compliance

121. From God, but through the observance of the rule, the religious must expect everything: holiness and perseverance until death. 1. Certainty of holiness. The unceasing tendency towards Christian perfection, which is the

fundamental obligation of the religious state, is realized in a complete way by the observance of the rule. To sanctify oneself, it is enough to keep it carefully and lovingly. It is such a straight and sure path that it is impossible to go astray (cf. Is 35:8). For holiness consists in nothing other than the full conformity of our will with the divine will; and what does the religious who is faithful to his rule do but to fulfill at all times the will of God, expressed s Cf. 2-2,186,9c et ad 1.

and contained in it? His whole life is transformed into a continuous exercise of obedience and love for the will of God, which is as much as to say an unceasing exercise of sanctification. And all this, according to the spirit of the founder and of the order itself, exactly as it should be; according to the will of God. 2. Certainty of perseverance. The religious finds in the observance of the rule the great principle of stability in the good and a sure pledge of attaining the triple perseverance: in the grace of God, in the vocation and in the final perseverance. a) Perseverance in the grace of God. Unbribable fidelity to his rule and constitutions presupposes in the faithful religious an exquisite delicacy of conscience; a spirit of prayer, fervent reception of the sacraments, flight from the world, continuous practice of the most varied virtues, great energy of character and many other things of the same kind, which distance him more and more from sin and strengthen and confirm him in the state of grace. Impossible to sin if he does not deviate from the fulfillment of his rule, b) Perseverance in his vocation. Is not practicing the rule also equivalent to

rooting oneself forever in one’s vocation? Is there any religious who is a slave to regularity who abandons his order to return to the world? He who is faithful to the least prescriptions^ of his rule and keeps them scrupulously, how can he dare to sacrilegiously betray his vows? “He who is faithful in a little is faithful also in much; and he who is unfaithful in a little is unfaithful also in much” (Le 16:10). There is no firmer guarantee of perseverance in one’s vocation than the exact and meticulous practice of one’s rule and constitutions. c) Final perseverance. Since the rule is the key to paradise, how can anyone who lives and dies in the congregation not hope for heaven? Final perseverance, a supreme grace that no one can merit, is achieved, however, infallibly with prayer and the exact practice of one’s religious obligations. Everyone who dies kissing the habit of his order, dies with the clearest and most unmistakable sign of the predestined. b)

The risks of non-compliance

122 Hope, considered as a theological virtue, is a mixture of security and fear. Security in God, in his power, in his goodness, in his faithfulness to his promises, in the merits of Jesus Christ; but, at the same time, fear before the resistance that the defective freedom of the creature, driven by the impetus of his own passions, the temptations of the devil or the evil influence of the seductive world, can put up to the saving action of God. Security and fear also affect the observance of the rule. We must expect everything from it, as we have just explained in the previous paragraph; but at the same time we must fear it.

The lack of observance can become a source of scandal for others and an occasion of ruin for us. Inobservance is the habitual nonobservance of the rule and constitutions. By this path, the inobservant religious walks towards his perdition. Here are the principal risks of nonobservance, or, if you will, the principal stages of perdition: 1. a Vulgarity of life. The first unfortunate and infallible consequence of inobservance is the diminution and deprivation of the special graces of sanctification. As a rule, God treats as he is treated. To depart from the rule is to place oneself outside the providential order and to withdraw from the influence of the Holy Spirit. The inevitable consequence of this regime of restriction of graces is the languor of the soul, the weakening of the virtues and an exhausted spiritual life. Fewer graces, less sap and, perforce, fewer flowers and less fruit. Without water and sunshine, the soul becomes dry and parched land, with little and scanty vegetation. Farewell to the fertile harvest and the tightly packed sheaves! This is the explanation of many religious lives, neither good nor bad, but simply insubstantial. It is the triumph of moral dullness. No bursts of enthusiasm, not a single impulse to rise towards the ideal. A continuous and endless march along the lane of mediocrity; a perennial drowsiness and spiritual somnolence, as if in the soul the sleeping sickness had taken hold. What moths are to clothes and slugs are to flowers, so are repeated failures of observance to fervor. 2. a Tepidness. The frequent, unjustified violation, without purpose of amendment, of the rule or constitutions, brings with it the habitual venial sin, that is, lukewarmness. He who practices regular observance only when it rhymes with his taste; he who with full deliberation and frequently despises silence, dispenses himself from some exercises or acts of community, judges and criticizes superiors, sows discord with malicious or imprudent gossip, neglects the delicacies prescribed in regard to poverty and modesty, is undoubtedly a religious who has fallen into lukewarmness. Lukewarmness

is abominable in the sight of God. In the Apocalypse we read these words written to the angel of Laodicea: "I know your works and that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were cold or hot; but because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I am ready to vomit you out of my mouth" (Rev. 3:15-16). This kind of abandonment of God is almost always accompanied by a darkening of faith, insensitivity of conscience, abulia of the will, hardening of the heart, displeasure and tedium of spiritual life, awakening of passions.... From this to falling into mortal sin there is but one step, and some take it.

C3. Regular compliance

3.a Mortal sin. An enormous disgrace for a Christian, mortal sin is a real catastrophe for the religious. Occasionally, though rarely, a religious observant can be seen to commit a grave fault in a moment of thoughtless recklessness, since no one is impeccable in this world. But he immediately rises up with great repentance and humility, taking occasion from his own fault to take extreme precautions in order never to commit it again. But this, it must be admitted, is not frequent among good religious. In the moral order, as in the physical, sudden deaths are an exception. The normal thing is to end one's life through sickness or old age. The soul almost always dies a victim of lukewarmness. The lukewarmness born of a lack of observance leads to mortal sin by five different ways: a) Anemia. The habitual violation of the rule engenders lukewarmness, which is for the soul what tuberculosis is for the body: it weakens the organism, exhausts the strength and turns life into a slow agony. A violent temptation presents itself, an unforeseen crisis arises, and the will, weak and sickly, yields without resistance like a dry leaf swept away by the gale. b) Contempt for the law. As St. Thomas teaches, "the frequency of sin disposes to contempt for the law "6; and formal

contempt for the law always constitutes grave sin, even if it is a secondary or minor law. c) Illusion of conscience. Lukewarmness obscures the judgment and falsifies the conscience. From slight infractions one passes little by little to more important and even serious faults, to end up without realizing it in enormous infidelities. Undecided and blurred the line of separation between mortal and venial sin, on this tightrope one rides happily and dangerously. Doubtful principles in matters of chastity and lax interpretations of poverty are blurring and attenuating the authority of the rule to accommodate the whim of the transgressor. Delicacy of conscience appears as "scrupulosity" and "narrowness of spirit". Little by little..., without shocks, without stridencies, dangerous habits are contracted because of their laxity; and from fault to fault, from relaxation to relaxation, one ends up in the grave violation of the vows. d) Scandal of others. There is hardly anything that spreads more quickly and effectively in a religious community than the bad example of some of its members, especially if it is a question of the superiors or serious religious themselves. When this bad example induces others to unscrupulously break basic points of observance, e.g., habitual silence, fasts, lack of attendance at acts of obligatory community, etc., thereby introducing a bad habit contrary to the rule, it could easily constitute a real mortal sin on the part of those who promoted such a relaxation with their bad example. e) Divine punishment. The rule is a fence: to tear it down or destroy it is to allow the world and the devil to enter the interior precincts. It is a "

2-2,186,9

ad 3.

P.III. The mystical-docetic aspect of religious life.

to demolish it is to convert the soul into an open city or a dismantled citadel. The Rule contains a series of prescriptions and prohibitions, inspired by an admirable prudence, concerning modesty, correspondence, visits in the parlor or outside the convent, relations with the laity and the exercise of the apostolate. Sometimes it is enough to neglect just one of these precautions to find oneself in a compromising situation or for a very serious temptation to arise which, by God's just punishment, one cannot resist. How many deep and scandalous falls could have been avoided with a little more care and respect for the most holy prescriptions of the Rule! Deus non deserit nisi prias deseratur, says the Council of Trent: God does not abandon anyone if we do not abandon Him first.

4. Loss of vocation. An exceptional grace-the greatest of all after redemption and baptism, according to St. Alphonsus Liguori-religious vocation can be culpably lost. Not all religious who leave the cloister are guilty of infidelity to their vocation. There may be entirely inculpable causes that authorize and even advise a return to the secular life. But there is also the case, unfortunately all too often, in which the return to the world is a real disloyalty to God, who had distinguished the guilty person with an authentic and true vocation. If at some point in his past life he felt truly called by God, he continues to be so, since, as St. Paul says, "the gifts and vocation of God are irrevocable" (Rom 11:29). The origin of these guilty desertions is almost always to be found in the habitual lack of delicacy in the observance of the Rule. Boredom of an insubstantial life, without ideals, without generosity, without joy; community life increasingly heavy and unbearable; corruption and loss of the spirit of their institute; displeasure of a vocation whose sublimity and value are not understood; incomprehension and continuous friction with superiors, obliged to call to order and to punish; deaf opposition to the orders and dispositions

of authority; disaffection, antipathy and misanthropy in relation to the brothers; as amusement and consolation, entering into useless and sometimes dangerous relationships with worldly people, whose mentality and customs are assimilated; finally, perhaps the illusion that salvation is assured even in the Order and that perhaps a more fruitful apostolate can be exercised, since the world “needs the example of good Christians” - of him who did not even know how to be a good Christian in the greenhouse of religion!*—All these causes and many others, united and combined, subject fidelity to such a strain that perseverance becomes extremely difficult. All it takes is a slightly harsher shock than usual to bring about the definitive rupture: dispensation from vows and return to the century. And who can foresee the future life of these defectors? If their soul could not take root in the fertile soil of the religious state, always watered with abundant graces, where will it end up, transplanted to the scorching desert of the world? Sad existence is theirs, full of remorse, condemned to sterility and in great danger of going astray definitively through the loss of faith and the scandal of total apostasy.

5. Eternal damnation. The last, supreme and irreparable misfortune, which hangs menacingly over the heads of those who are given to the contempt of the rule, is the eternal damnation of their souls. The religious who have fallen into hell have condemned themselves, without exception, because of their nonobservance. If fidelity to the rule even in its smallest details is one of the clearest signs of predestination and an infallible pledge of salvation, the spirit of irregularity constitutes, on the contrary, one of the most fearful signs of eternal damnation. It must be repeated

many times: consecrated souls do not jump headlong into the abyss, they slip and fall into it gently and insensibly....

4*

Love for the rule

123. Love is the third element of the cult of the rule and the most important and essential. Love is the principle of activity and the fullness of perfection in the moral order; it is the source of splendor and fruitfulness for the soul, like the sun for nature. This is why Christianity is the religion of love. If faith makes the believer, only charity creates the saint. What is a Christian who believes and does not love? A spiritual corpse, a dry branch destined for fire if the sap does not take care of renewing it. With this we can already glimpse the exceptional importance and the preponderant role of love in the cult of the Rule. It can be summed up in a brief formula, which must be carefully studied: love for the rule and the rule for love. a)

Love of the rule

124. It is very important to discover the foundations and to examine the characteristics of this love. 1. Foundations of love for the rule. Here are the principal ones: a) Faith, trust and love are mutually and harmoniously called and completed. Just as the root and trunk of a plant are crowned with flowers, so love is the normal flowering of faith and trust. He who believes and hopes in the rule, * must necessarily love it, if he does not do violence to his soul. b) The instinctive tendency of man to fall in love with truth, beauty and goodness. Is there anything truer, more beautiful and more good for the religious than his rule?

Masterpiece of God and of the Church, echo of the Gospel, monument of wisdom, source of holiness, guarantee and efficacy of apostolate, how could we fail to admire it and, above all, to love it? c) The impossibility of observing the rule with fidelity if we do not love it passionately, Who are the religious scrupulously faithful to the discipline? Those in love with the rule and nothing more than these. He who loves the rule, keeps it, and he who does not love it, does not observe it. A free being like man is not governed by violence: he only allows himself to be led by love. He who does not love the rule will with difficulty sacrifice his selfishness to it. Love of the rule is the beginning, the support and the crowning of religious observance, 2, Characteristics of this love. The delicate and perfect love of the rule presents the following principal characters: a) Disinterested love. Rational love is divided, as is well known, into love of benevolence and love of concupiscentiat according to whether we desire good to someone disinterestedly or for the profit and usefulness that it can bring to us or to the person we love. When the person whom we love already possesses the good that we would wish for him, the love of benevolence is called the love of complacency; we are pleased that he already possesses that good. The love of concupiscence is a relative love; that of benevolence, an absolute love mixed with desire; that of complacency, a perfect love that rests happily in the beloved person. It is necessary to love the Rule with a love of concupiscenciat for the great benefits that its observance brings us; but, above all, with a love of complacenciat for its perfection and for being the most precious relic of the holy founder. To see this treasure squandered and this relic profaned should fill us with greater sorrow and dismay than the artist in the presence of a painting of Raphael stained, pierced or torn by a stupid vandalism. b) Supernatural love. The love of the rule must be inspired and developed in and by supernatural motives. It must be a simple flowering of our

love for God, whose will it contains and expresses; for Jesus Christ, because it radiates his spirit, his heart and his holiness; for the Church, because it is his work and contributes to his glory; for the Order itself, because it is its soul and the source of its vitality; for the a/mas, because it is an incomparable instrument for the apostolate. c) Generous love. The rule, like every law, binds freedom and contradicts one's own tastes and whims. It is necessary that the religious soul accept its rigors and embrace them, because, thanks to them, the religious "is stripped of the old man, corrupted by the corruption of error; he is renewed in spirit and is clothed with the new man, created according to God in true justice and holiness" (cf. Eph. 4:22-24). d) Persevering love. It is necessary to love the Rule untiringly, always and everywhere, throughout life, until the last moment of life. Happy is the religious who, with one foot already in the tomb, can say with truth: "I love my rule; I have always loved it with all my soul, with all my heart and with all my strength, as I love my God, whose will I have always loved with all my soul, with all my heart and with all my strength, as I love my God, whose will I have always loved with all my soul, with all my heart and with all my strength.

C.3. J^a regular compliance

But I have never loved it so much as in the twilight of my existence, now that I am about to appear before God. Let us always hold the book of the Holy Rule to our breast and thus enter, smiling, into eternity, defended by these three invincible weapons that must constitute our three great loves: the crucifix, the rosary and the rule of our Order. b)

The rule for love

125. Love for the rule should impel the religious to practice the rule for love. Keeping the rule out of love is an obligatory and fruitful program. 1. Obligatory program. Man was created to know, love and serve God. And he must serve him out of love, because love is the fullness of the law (Rom 13:10) and the end of the law (1 Tim 1:5). Therefore, he must do everything out of love (1 Cor 16:14), for the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31). Love that in Christianity receives a new name: friendship with Jesus Christ. We must love Jesus Christ to the point of passion, to the point of making Him our own life: "My life is Christ" (Phil 1:21). And this love for Christ must overflow over our brothers and sisters, because that is what he wants and commands (Phil. 13:34). Service of God, glory of the Father, love of Christ, salvation of souls! This is the end of the Christian life and, therefore, of religious life. And if the rule constitutes the whole program of religious life, it must be concluded that all regular observance must be inspired and enlivened by this sentiment of charity in its many forms. It is not enough to keep the rule materially; it is necessary to keep it out of love.

2. Fruitful program. A religious who, throughout his daily journey, observes his rule with love and for love of God, Jesus Christ and souls, will soon raise his life to prodigious heights. Every observance fulfilled out of love represents an act of charity that merits and causes-if it is sufficiently intense-the immediate increase of sanctifying grace, of the infused virtues and of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Why be surprised, then, that a whole life, consecrated out of pure love to fulfill the will of God, should end in the highest sanctity? Let us repeat: all the holiness of the religious soul consists in keeping the rule out of love.

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The external worship of the rule

126. Just as the roots, the trunk and the branches of a tree, following their natural evolution, end up with flowers and fruits, so also the internal worship of faith, hope and love, which we have just analyzed, leads logically to the external worship of the rule, that is, to regular observance. From the union of both cults flows the integral cult of the rule. Both are solidary, and the integrity of the first engenders the perfection of the second. With regard to external worship, we will examine the delicacies and the martyrdom of observance. a)

Delicacies of compliance

127. There are many ways of keeping the rule, infinite degrees and shades of observance. Alongside punctual and meticulous, joyful and persevering observance, how many half-hearted, lax, lax observances, full of cracks and leaks! Some, in their self-righteous eagerness to justify their mediocrity, go so far as to label as “narrow-mindedness” what is virginity of conscience, and “Jansenist rigidity” incorruptible fidelity.... It is necessary to take the unbreakable resolution to keep the rule: “I have sworn it and I want to keep it” (Ps 118:106). It is necessary to guard it “as the pupils of the eyes” (Prov 7:2), to the last detail (Mt 5:18) and to excess, if possible: custodiri nimis (Ps 118:4). There are three principal characteristics of perfect external observance: 1. It is not enough to do materially what is commanded by the rule: it must be done in a perfect and finished way. It is necessary to worship the “finished thing”,

like the artisans of old. How many religious do things in the good way of God, as they come out, as they cost the least effort! They attend prayer bodily, but with an absent and distracted soul; they hurry through the breviary, pronouncing the words half-heartedly; they shut themselves up in their cells to amuse themselves with trifles; they carry out their duties reluctantly and slowly.... They forget that "cursed is he who does the work of the Lord carelessly" (Ier 48:10). - Brother in charge of calling the community/: at the right time, without a minute's delay, at the right time, without any delay.

C.3. Regular compliance

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- Brother doorkeeper: he immediately runs to open the door for Christ, who knocks, as St. Alphonsus Rodriguez did when he heard the bell: "I am coming, Lord". - Brother nurse!!!: exquisite delicacy, unalterable patience with the sick, as if it were Christ himself: "You did it to me" (Mt 25:40). - Brother student: study intensely, not out of intellectual curiosity, nor for vanity (brilliant exams), nor thinking of high positions for tomorrow. Because God wants it, because souls need it.... Study for love: therein lies your holiness. - Professor, preacher: put the best of your effort, your intelligence and your heart at the service of your sublime apostolic mission. When you do not prepare yourself properly, your students notice it, the Christian people notice it and, above all, God notices it! - If you are a choir nun, sing the divine office as best you can: with dignity, with recollection, with attention to the rubrics and to the splendors of the ceremonial. - In the refectory: transform this animal act into a human and religious act. Eat and drink as Christ himself would. - In the recreation: to recreate himself in order to recreate others, with joy and joviality, together with the most exquisite

prudence and discretion. - In the street: “We are going to preach a sermon in the company of the best preacher: Friar Example”; Of a holy religious (Father Chevrier) it could be said: “He does all things well: he celebrates Mass well and closes the doors well”; and of the holy Curé of Ars his historian tells us: “He said nothing and did nothing that could be said or done better”.

2. Love of detail. “What is small is small,” said St. Augustine; “but to be faithful to what is small is a very great thing”. Can there be anything petty or despicable when it is a question of the will of God? Is not Christ in a small particle of the Sacred Form as complete as in the whole of it? In the observance of the rule, one must go to the last detail. Even to the point of leaving outside the cell at night an extra pin that St. Therese unexpectedly found in her habit. It is not a scruple or a Jansenist spirit: it is the exquisite delicacy of a heart dilated by love. In a certain sense it is necessary to pay more attention to the small than to the great, and this for various reasons: the great is rarely present, the small at every moment; the great attracts everyone’s attention, the small passes almost unnoticed by ourselves; fidelity to the small is the best guarantee of fidelity to the great (Le 16:10); he who despises the small things will gradually fall into the great things (Eccl 19:1). St. Therese was the saint of detail. She never did anything rare or extraordinary. But she always had, as someone has said, “a stubborn and terrible

obstinacy in fulfilling her duty in the smallest things for love of the Beloved”. It is due to this exquisite fidelity to the little things that she is, in the words of St. Pius X, “the greatest saint of modern times”,

3. Exact punctuality. The third characteristic of perfect observance is exactness. Do everything at the appointed time, not before or after. Do not disturb the various occupations. Always be where obedience requires us to be: chapel, refectory, recreation. Avoid any voluntary delay, no matter how small. At the ringing of the bell, obey immediately: not a second more in bed, not a word more in recreation, leave unfinished the letter we were writing.... Minutiae? Perhaps. But these minutiae distinguish the saints from those who are not. Holiness does not consist in that, but it is noticeable in that. What peace and tranquility one breathes in a religious house where the most exquisite punctuality and exactitude reign! And what a sad impression is produced, on the contrary, by disorder and confusion, by continuous delays, by the arrival of stragglers one after the other! Why should one tolerate in the convent what one would not tolerate in the factory or in the barracks? What in these latter places is something purely external and mechanical must be spirit and love in the house of God. What an example that of the great St. Teresa of Jesus at the time of her foundations! In her travels through the dusty roads of Spain, ground and shaken in an old carriage, in the company of her daughters, she kept and forced to keep the rule with the most exact punctuality: time for silence, time for prayer, time for recreation...; with a little bell she was ringing next to the little gourd of holy water. b)

The martyrdom of observance

128. Perfect observance demands great fortitude of soul: it is a continual sacrifice and a kind of martyrdom. There is a “martyrdom by pinpricks,” or by slow fire, which requires as much or more endurance than that needed to die by beheading or by burning at the stake. Religious life constitutes a kind of martyrdom because of the sacrifices it imposes, because of the struggles it awakens, and because

of its very duration, which extends over a lifetime. The sacrifices of observance. The religious life-as we saw in its corresponding place-constitutes a true holocaust ‘1, which was the most perfect sacrifice of the Old Law, in which the victim was totally consumed by fire. The religious has to die completely to the world 7 01.2-2,186,1.

in order to live exclusively for God. The total immolation of oneself for the sake of regular observance presupposes a constant exercise of self-denial, which is hardly possible without a great spirit of sacrifice. The rule imposes an exquisite fidelity to the vows, and this often demands superhuman energy, which only with the grace of God can be endured. 2. The struggles of observance. We refer first of all to the internal struggles coming from the environment that often surrounds the fervent and observant religious. Unfortunately, not all communities are sanctuaries of regularity, nor are all religious models of observance. Faced with certain religious who are as susceptible as they are bad observers of the rule, the faithful religious will need great firmness and energy. Only he who has been forged and tempered in the struggle will know how to resist, to oppose and, if necessary, to protest against the current, perhaps general, impetuous and overwhelming. St. Therese used to say: “The fact that everyone fails to observe the rule is not a reason that justifies us. Each one must act as if the perfection of the order depended on his personal conduct” But how much fortitude is needed for this!

This internal struggle for observance is often accompanied by dangerous influences from outside. The departures from the convent, the contact with the world, the visits of the

friends, the relations of apostolate, etc., offer more than one occasion to forget or to break the rule with deceitful pretexts of courtesy, of condescension, of amplitude of criterion..., when in reality it obeys all to the human respect, to the love of the comforts, to the pruritus of independence and other unjustifiable motives. Only convinced and resolute religious will succeed in getting rid, though not without a struggle, of such a stumbling block. 3. The duration of observance. Among all the inseparable sacrifices of a life of regular observance, will not perseverance be the hardest and most costly? To live fifty or more years of religious life without faltering, while remaining faithful to the smallest details of the rule and constitutions, presupposes a heroic mettle of soul and a fortitude that can withstand any trial: "Perseverance," writes Father Faber, "is the greatest of trials, the heaviest of burdens and the most overwhelming of crosses. It is not for nothing that perseverance is an integral part of the cardinal virtue of fortitude 8 . 3 cf. a-a, 137,2.

 P.IJ. Ascetical-mystical aspect of religious life 6* P. IJ.

Enemies of observance

129. There are legion of enemies who attack or oppose the cult of the rule, both internally and externally. In reality, everything that constitutes an obstacle to the spiritual life is also opposed to regular observance. Sometimes they are frank and shameless enemies, but more often they are disguised and crafty, who present themselves under the guise of good and destroy the observance at its very root without tormenting the conscience of their victim. We will speak of the enemies of the internal and external worship of the rule. a)

Enemies of the internal cult

130 Internal worship, as we have seen, consists in faith, trust and love for the rule. The greatest and most terrible enemy of this threefold worship is ourselves: the “old man” (Rom 6:6), who resists the total immolation of himself for the sake of perfect and rigorous observance. This is why he invents a thousand pretexts and excuses to shake off his yoke. 131 1. Here are the principal enemies:

of the cult of faith in the rule.

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a) The human spirit, that is, the habit of appreciating and judging the legislation of the order, not from the supernatural point of view inspired by faith, but in the light of critical and proud reason. And so one speaks with all impudence and unabashedness of “exaggerated rigor,” of “obstacles against freedom,” of “barriers against one’s own initiative,” etc., etc., *etc.* With such a mentality, to what will veneration, love and observance of the rule be reduced? It is incredible to what extent some religious have a naturalistic and human spirit with which they judge everything, criticize everything, make fun of everything and live in a purely natural and rationalistic climate that has nothing to do, not only with the demands of their religious profession, but not even - many times - with the most elementary norms of the simple Christian faith. b) False interpretations. Undoubtedly, some points of the rule or of the constitutions, like those of any legislative code, are susceptible of precisions, developments, practical adaptations; it is necessary to clarify the obscure texts, to fix the sense of the doubtful ones and to indicate the limits of what they command or prohibit. But, apart from the fact that the constitutions themselves usually specify who is to interpret them in the

In doubtful cases - the general chapter, major superiors, etc., never the simple subject at his own whim and under examination - there are a few principles that can rightly guide the simple religious when, at a given moment, he has to decide on his own because he cannot have recourse to the competent superior. To interpret the rule according to the spirit that inspired and dictated it, that is, according to the spirit of the Gospel, of the Founder and of the Order. - Never - unless there are grave reasons - to depart from the traditional sense and from the established custom among good religious, since this is the best interpreter of the law. - Always lean, in case of doubt, to the side of grace as opposed to that of nature. - Before deciding, sincerely invoke the Holy Spirit, the Virgin of Good Counsel, and contemplate Jesus Christ crucified.

These maxims are all the more pernicious because many of them appear to be true, but they are nothing more than misunderstandings that pretend to be based on good sense, prudence and even charity. In practice, it is almost impossible to break any point of the rule-even the purely disciplinary ones-without committing some venial sin of negligence, willful carelessness, disedification of one’s neighbor, and so on. In any case, even supposing it were no sin at all, would we be authorized to break it because of it? Is that what the founder intended and what we promised before God when we made profession? - Who can doubt it? But is it reasonable to want to legitimize with it a comfortable and cowardly semi-observance, with its edges smoothed, without abnegation or sacrifice? - The rule does not oblige under sin”.

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“No need to be scrupulous.” Undoubtedly. But let us not confuse scrupulousness with delicacy. Not to utter a useless word during silence, to obey the bell ringing on the spot, to ask permission to the superior when it is necessary to ask it and other similar things are not scruples, but exquisite delicacy and even obligatory fidelity to our laws.

- We have to be open-minded and understanding, especially when it comes to the

Conformable if by this is meant that it is necessary to weigh the circumstances of time and persons, to yield to the demands of prudence and to the delicacy of goodness on certain occasions, *etc.* But in no way if it is intended to always and in everything to sweeten the austerities of the rule, to turn a blind eye to manifest abuses, to condescend with ease to unjustified dispensations and attenuations, *etc.* This is not “breadth of criterion”, but laxity and unforgivable relaxation. all superiors”.

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“The figure of the reforming friar is repugnant”. It is very true if one wants to condemn the fussy, ill-tempered, murmuring regularity of others; to set oneself up as an uncompromising defender

of the letter of the law, in ruthless critic of authority, in inexorable judge of his brothers; not tolerate the slightest fault without launching the Pharisaic cry of scandal and relaxation, etc.. All this is very bad. But is it also Pharisaism to have the right and duty to warn the superiors, - with all gentleness, humility and modesty, of the abuses and

disorders that are being introduced, so that they can correct them appropriately? Is it Pharisaism to observe with exquisite fidelity and delicacy the smallest details of the rule, - even if the observant religious has to go against the general current and to the other religious his blameless conduct seems to be a censure and a lesson? I wish there were many reformers like that in all convents! - THE TIMES HAVE CHANGED.* THE RULE IS ANTIQUATED. But the Gospel remains intact, the spirit of the founder of the Order has not changed and our sacred commitments remain intact. Let us try to adapt ourselves to the Gospel and to our laws, not the other way around. In any case, if it should be necessary or convenient to adapt some point of the rule to the special circumstances of our time, let the competent superiors do it, but never the simple subdict on his own account and reason. * 1 .

132*’

2.

Enemies of the cult of confidence in the re Against the1 virtue of hope one can sin in two ways: by excess and by defect. The first constitutes presumption; the second, despair. Something similar may occur in relation to the cult; of the rule. gla.

a) Etiemigos by excess. Let us cite the two most important: ‘ 1,° The Protestant spirit. The Protestant or Lutheran is satisfied with the Bible; it constitutes his whole religion, his whole faith, hope and love. What he rejects-and precisely for this reason he is a Protestantis a living and personal authority who has the right to interpret it authentically and to command in its name. For some religious the rule fo is everything; the rule and nothing else that governs it. From this stems their mania for demeaning superiors and exalting

the rule (often interpreted in their own way, of course), for opposing the rights of the latter to the jurisdiction of the former, for appealing to their authority against the authorities, as Protestantism appeals to the Bible against the pope; for arrogating to themselves the right to judge, criticize, censure and even obstinately resist the orders or directives of superiors, under the pretext that they are against or outside the rule. jCurious way of practicing the virtue of "disobedience", under the guise of observance and regularity! If in any case the superior should certainly go too far, the correct solution would be to practice with him the phrasal correction - with prudence and humility - or to denounce him to the major superior. Protestantism, free examination..., never! ' 2.0. Exclusive and literal worship... "The rule, the whole rule and nothing but the rule, without taking anything from it or adding anything to it" - This rule is exaggerated and, therefore, false and dangerous. To act in this way would be, in fact, to close the entrance of the Holy Spirit into the soul? The demands of grace cannot be exclusively framed in written legislation. The rule is not a "maximum" but a "minimum" program of sanctification, which the Holy Spirit can complete and perfect with his inspirations. No

The saint has been a minimist: everyone went beyond the letter of the rule to live better its spirit. The friar who only attends to the bell, does not even attend to the bell. -The minimal program is not enough, not even to fulfill perfectly the minimal program.

b)

Default enemies. The main ones are two:

1. The desire for novelty. It is very fashionable, especially among inexperienced young people, to consider traditional things as old and outdated: “We have to keep up with the times; everything evolves in the world; to new times, new forms of life and apostolate”. These aspirations are, in part, justified. The Church herself gives us an example with the innovations she is introducing, especially through the Second Vatican Council. But it is up to the superiors and not to the subjects to establish in the legislation of their own order the suitable adaptations to the circumstances of modern times. The subject must obey and remain silent, without losing confidence in the sanctifying efficacy of his old rule and renouncing the vain and dangerous prurience of preferring the modern because it is modern and the comfortable because it is comfortable. 2. The ILLUSION.of MORE AND better. It is illusion and lack of confidence in one’s own rule to want to make amends with ascetic eccentricities that disturb the progress of the community, going out of the healthy and traditional current that good religious observe, and desiring, e.g., to die for Christ at the same time that silence is broken. St. Teresa rightly writes: ■ “We do not keep some very low things of the rule, such as silence, which will not harm us, and we have not hurt our head when we stop going to choir, which does not kill us either, and we want to invent penances of our head so that we cannot do the one or the other. “9 ¡.i. It is good that we do not close the door to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit towards a life of greater perfection, as we have said above. But let us not forget that the first care of fervent souls must be, not to add something to the rule, but rather to perfect themselves in its observance, practicing it with more gentleness, more generosity, more faith and more love. It is better to peel potatoes out of obedience than to attend Mass for one’s own pleasure and at an inconvenient or

unaccustomed hour... / The Lord said one day to St. Margaret Mary: “I want you to be suspicious of everything that keeps you from the exact observance of the rule, which you must prefer to everything else... . ‘

*3’ Enemies of the cult of love of the rule. The main ones are routine, formalism, haste, dissipation and lightness of spirit. A word about routine, that is, the habit of thinking, speaking and acting unconsciously. Automatism of a life from which the deep and the ‘divine’ are banished, and which gradually drags us into the purely external cult of the rule. Everything is done punctually, myritically and ritually. Each day, from getting up to going to bed, passes, plain and simple’, without incident, following the planned and immutable rhythm. But

.9 Santa Terssa,

Camino

of perfection c.io n,6.

In this monotonous succession of occupations, what part do the soul, the intelligence, the will and the heart take? Where are faith and charity? It seems that obligations are fulfilled. Appearances have been saved, but everything was done without inner spirit, without soul and without life. Routine forgets or discards what constitutes precisely the greatness and fruitfulness of regular life; love. A perfectly calm, monotonous and... empty. That is the fruit of routine. It is necessary to react energetically against it. Here are the principal means: a) Recollection and habitual deep silence. b) Habit of entering “within oneself” when doing anything,

Age quod agis (“do what you do”), as a classical philosopher advised. What is so special about being distracted in prayer if we are distracted all day long and in any occupation? c) Rectify the intention when starting anything. Renew it frequently, with a simple aspiration of the heart. Dom Columba Marmion associated to the inclination of each Gloria Patri…. of the psalms the intimate petition to feel oneself as a child of God and to act with an ever greater filial spirit. b)

Enemies of the external cult

134” The external cult, as we said, must be the manifestation and overflow of the internal one. The latter without the former would be incomplete; but the external without the internal would be pure automatism or refined hypocrisy. Perfection lies in the meeting and exercise of the two. The principal enemies of the external cult are two: 1. Dispensation is not an evil in itself. There are useful, obligatory, imposed by prudence and charity. Canon law and religious rules recognize their legitimacy. Never to grant a dispensation to anyone would be a real injustice, an intolerable rigorism and a cult of the rule that would lead to fetishism. But the opposite extreme is no less evil and dangerous: laxity. When dispensations are multiplied or granted on the slightest pretext, the rule loses its rigidity and becomes a loose bond that is loosened at any time and on any occasion. The dispensation is a complex and delicate problem, whose solution requires, at the same time, knowledge and prudence, kindness and firmness. Let us recall some fundamental principles: a) Any unjustified dispensation, that is, without just and proportionate cause, is invalid on the part of the immediate superior (he cannot give it).

C‘3’ Compliance re guiding

and illicit on the part of the subject (he cannot use it). This is expressly stated in the canonical code (en.84). b) A dispensation granted for just and reasonable causes is always valid and licit. The superior can grant it (if it does not exceed the limits of his authority) and the subject can use it. c) Dispensations, even if they are legitimate, if they become general, frequent and lasting, degenerate insensibly into chronic abuses and into real relaxations, which later on will be very difficult to correct or to uproot.

2. Excessive care for one's health. Charity for oneself demands that one take reasonable care of one's health, based on ordinary means. It is obligatory to manifest to the superior, with humility and simplicity, one's illnesses and infirmities in order to remedy them, especially if they could be considerably aggravated by lack of due care. But how many abuses are committed daily in convents with regard to health! Let us listen to St. Teresa l0: "Now, then, the first thing that we have to try to do is to remove from us the love of this body, that we are some so gifted of our natural that there is not little to do here; and so friendly of our health, that it is thing to praise God the war that they give, to nuns in special, and even to those who are not. But some nuns do not seem to come to the monastery for anything else but to try not to die; each one tries as best she can. Here, to tell the truth, there is little room for that with the work, but I would not want to have the desire. Make up your minds, sisters, that you come to die for Christ and not to give yourselves away for Christ; for this is what the devil puts there, which is necessary to carry and keep the order; and one wants to keep the order so much with the desire to procure health to keep and preserve it that one dies without fulfilling it for a single month, or even for a single day. Well, I don't know why we are here".

How well his angelic daughter of Lisieux, St. Therese of the Child Jesus, assimilated these teachings of the distinguished reformer of Carmel! She had the principle that one must reach the exhaustion of all one's strength before complaining. One Holy Thursday she vomited blood, and the next day, Friday, she fasted on bread and water, like all the others, and finished the day without any dispensation. For more than a year she continued to follow the community, concealing as much as possible the exhaustion of her strength. After her day of suffering, she went to matins every night, after which she returned to her cell with great difficulty, climbing the stairs to the dormitory alone and stopping at each step to breathe. When she arrived at her cell, it sometimes took her more than an hour to be able to breathe, and then she went back to her cell with great difficulty.

take off his clothes. And to rest he had only a hard straw mattress, not even when his poor back was riddled with fire buttons. Perhaps it is not obligatory for everyone to reach this superhuman heroism. Perhaps Saint Therese would have lived a few more years in this world if she had paid a little more attention to her health. But, probably, she would not have climbed the summit of sanctity nor would she now enjoy in heaven the sublime glory that corresponds to the universal Patroness of the Catholic missions.... Health! Why don't we concern ourselves a little more with the health of the soul, even if it is a little at the expense of the health of the body? - Believe, daughters, that as we begin to overcome these little stumps, they do not tire us so much. There will be enough of you to see what is necessary; to neglect yourselves, if it were not for a known necessity. If we

are not determined to swallow death and lack of health at once, we will never do anything. Try not to fear it and leave all in God, come what may” 11.

7.

Progress in the cult of the rule

r35. The cult of the rule is subject to the law of growth and progress, just as the spiritual life is contained and condensed in it. Faith, trust and love are like sap that rises and expands, making the observance flourish and producing more and more “seasoned and tasty fruits. Many are the causes that contribute to this rooting and expansion, but we will cite only two: the fervor of the subjects and the influence of the superiors. t a>

Role of the subjects

136. In the first place, it is the duty of the subjects to develop and develop interior devotion and the exterior practice of the rule on their own account and as a very personal matter. This personal work consists principally in study, prayer, constant and unfailing effort, and the chapter of faults. ‘ \ ■ í : v ;7 ‘: ; r. The study, of-the rule. Perfect regularity presupposes a complete, profound and loving knowledge of the rule, which is acquired by constant reading and meditation of the sacred book. To know our duty is the first and most indispensable of our duties.

Santa Teresa,

Way of perfectionc. i l-n.4 and S.

After the Gospel, with no other book should the religious be more familiar than with his rule and constitutions. This must be his bedside book, which he must read and meditate on without rest. It is necessary to study the rule in its broad outlines and in its small details, to study it in function of its two* ends, sanctification and apostolate; to fix the meaning and to appraise the gravity of each article. Under the luxuriant vegetation of its commands and prohibitions, one must find the sapiency and the spirit that inspired and justifies them; one must realize the solid foundation of its commands and prescriptions, of its usefulness from the individual and social point of view. Without this luminous and reasonable understanding it is almost impossible to keep the rule in all its purity and rigor; almost impossible to avoid those dangers that are called false interpretations, rigorism or laxity, deviation or corruption of the primitive spirit. 2. Prayer. The incessant study of the rule must be accompanied by fervent supplication to obtain from God the grace to fulfill it to the last detail. Without the grace of God we can do absolutely nothing in the supernatural order, not even to pronounce in a meritorious way the adorable name of Jesus (i Cor 12:3), Psalm rr8 is full of formulas as brief as they are sublime to ask the Lord for the grace to fulfill his commandments with all exactitude and perfection.

3. Constant and unwavering effort. “A Dios rogando y con el mazo dando”, as the Spanish proverb wisely says. Let us not forget that this effort aims at the development of internal and external worship simultaneously. They are solid rivers of each other and they support and reinforce each other’s. He who wants to fulfill the rule with all perfection, has to mobilize all his faculties and energies. Hard work and rough, struggle, which are identified in a certain way with the obligatory tendency towards perfection. Spirit of observance, religious life, holiness are three rings of the same chain and three elements that merge to the point of

confusion. In the morning meditation, a firm resolution to observe the rule; throughout the day, generosity in observance; at every fault, to humble oneself, to ask forgiveness and to rise with new vigor; daily control based on general and particular examination; reparatory penances, monthly and annual retreats to intensify the spirit of observance; such are the principal forms in which this constant and unwavering effort, which requires the perfect practice of the rule and constitutions, must be manifested.

4. The chapter of faults! Because of its repulsive aspect and because it is difficult and unpleasant to practice, the chapter of faults enjoys a low esteem among the majority of religious, who would gladly see its suppression. But there is no doubt that, well understood and practiced, it contributes powerfully to strengthen the cult of the rule. For this, it is necessary to avoid the two principal stumbling blocks which

What result can be expected from the often stereotyped accusation of certain faults, from an anodyne penance that is accepted and carried out, if not forgotten, without an interior spirit? How different would be the efficacy of the chapter of faults if each one of the religious brought to it the five fundamental elements of the sacrament of penance: examination, confession, contrition, resolution and reparation! Do many do it this way? Which religious leave the chapter determined to be vigilant, to overcome themselves, to restrain themselves and to avoid, at all costs, any fault against the rule or constitutions? For fifty years, a religious accused himself punctually of the disorder that reigned in his cell; when he died, his cell still resembled a lion’s den. How is it possible, in this spirit, that the chapter

of faults amounts to anything other than a simple waste of time for which God will have to be given a close account? b)

Role of superiors

137” Superiors have a role of the first order in promoting the cult of the rule. Authority is a right, a duty and a force: a right to be exercised, a duty to be fulfilled and a force to be used in the service of the observance of the fundamental laws of one’s own order or congregation. The principal superiors on whom falls the most serious obligation to procure the regular observance of all those subject to it are: the local superior, the provincial or visitator, and the provincial and general chapters 1. In a certain way, he is the principal and most important of all, since he is the only one who can control the subjects day by day and hour by hour.

2. The provincial or visitator. The canonical visitation is - or should be - an extraordinary effort of the authority and of the subjects for the benefit of perfect observance and regularity. The visitator must strive to bring the strayed to the right path, to encourage the weak and dejected, and to encourage the cowardly and lukewarm. If this result is not always achieved, it is not due to the institution itself, but to the defective way in which the canonical visitation is carried out by the subjects or by the visitator. a) The subjects are obliged to inform the visitator without human considerations and with complete independence; but in no way are they to turn the visitation into a personal elegy, a diatribe against their brethren or an accusation against the local authority. They should fulfill their informative duty with great rectitude of intention, high mindedness, sincerity, discretion, justice and, above all, charity. They must seek nothing but the good of their brothers and the benefit of the community, without yielding

never to the impulses of envy, petty grudges, trampled pride or the concerns of selfishness, feelings unworthy of a religious. b) The Visitor. His role can be summed up in three words: to see, to promote, to assure. First of all, to see clearly. Among the multitude of appreciations, judgments, affirmations, denials, complaints and criticisms concerning persons and things that the subjects have communicated to him, he must know how to discern what corresponds to imagination, passion, lack of judgment, eloquence, and to deduce the clean and exact truth. For this, simple prudence and psychological sense of smell are not enough: supernatural lights are needed. Having made the balance and formulated the moral diagnosis of the community, the visitator has to promote the observance of the rule, pointing out the forgotten or violated points, rectifying the equivocal maxims and false interpretations, uprooting abuses and bad habits, reminding all, superiors and subjects, of the obligation to return to the strict observance of the law. He must enlighten, encourage, censure and, if necessary, punish in order to restore the cult of the rule in all its strength and integrity. Finally, once the visitation is over, he must make sure that his observations do not fall on deaf ears or remain a dead letter. In order to achieve this, subsequent supervision is necessary, renewed as often as necessary, until the observance is completely reestablished. 3. THE PROVINCIAL AND GENERAL CHAPTERS. The provincial chapter has the right and the duty to supervise, assure and intensify the regular observance in all the houses of its own religious province. The general chapter has, in addition, the right to modify, complete and adapt the constitutions of the order in the manner determined by the laws of the Church or of the order itself. i The responsibility of the provincial and

general chapters is great! If their beneficent influence has been most effective on most occasions, it cannot be denied - history in hand - that on other occasions they have been the source from which the weakening and relaxation of the observance has sprung. The program of the chapter work must always be oriented to this triple purpose: to maintain the spirit and, if possible, even the letter of the constitutions themselves; to develop their potentialities in order to obtain from them the maximum sanctifying and apostolic yield; and to establish the indispensable adaptations, advised by the pontifical directives, or imposed by extraordinary circumstances, or by the needs of contemporary society. Prudent adaptations, without eagerness for novelties, without inspiration or modernism, in perfect agreement with the essential and characteristic purpose of the Order and in perfect harmony with the incorruptible spirit of the Founder. For that reason it is necessary to proceed with great prudence in the election of capitulars and never choose only eminent religious for their intelligence, good sense and love for the rule, passionately devoted to their own order and who know how to unite the cult of family traditions with the sense of the realities and needs of their time.

Prerogatives of the cult of the rule

138* By way of conclusion to this whole chapter on regular observance, let us briefly recall the untold advantages, both personal and social, with which God has enriched perfect regularity. Apart from assuring the holiness and, therefore, the eternal salvation of the religious faithful to his rule and constitutions-as we saw in speaking of the certainties of observance-three are the principal advantages of the

passionate worship of the rule: I, It is u>í POWERFUL WEAPON OF APOSTOLATE, By HIS way of living alone, whether he thinks about it or not, whether he wants it or not, each religious works to sanctify his brothers or to pervert them, At all times we contribute a stone to the common work of mutual edification or we give a blow of the pickaxe to the wall. The observant religious contributes mightily, by his exemplary conduct, never disproved, to the sanctification of his brethren; just as there is hardly anything more devastating and pernicious than the scandalous conduct of the unobservant and lax religious, This as far as the interior of the order is concerned, But the zeal of the religious must overflow the cloister and invade the world. An old Trappist, pointing with his finger to a world map, said, "Behold my parish!" In fact, wherever he is and whatever he does, even if he lives buried in a cell or lost in the Sahara desert, like Father de Foucauld, the religious saint, just by being a saint, exercises a prodigious apostolate. At the hour of his death, Abbé Huvellin said: "We do more good by what we are than by what we do". Now, where is religious holiness if not in regular observance? See, then, the regia transformed into one of the most powerful instruments of apostolate and redemption. If every soul that rises up lifts up the world after itself, what can be said of a religious whose life has been nothing but an uninterrupted ascent to Christian perfection? Güito of the rule, sanctity, apostolate: admirable trilogy to serve as a banner for the religious state. \ The humble little nun of Lisieux did nothing but keep the most insignificant details of her rule with heroic obstinacy and for the love of God; and the Church has declared her universal Patron of the missions next to the gigantic figure of Francis Xavier, who traveled halfway around the world in his devotional zeal.

C3. The regular observance

A great lesson can be drawn from this fact! How many unknown apostles, but very fruitful by their silent prayer, by their obscure sacrifice, by their life of constant observance and regularity! Grains of wheat sown and rotten in the field of the rule, unknown to all, but on which an immense harvest of ears of wheat rises towards God. The most fruitful apostolate is undoubtedly the apostolate of holiness, the secret of which, for the religious, is in the loving and loving observance of his rule.

2. It produces order, peace and fervor in the communities. A religious house is worth what its observance is worth.

a) If the rule is observed, there is discipline and punctuality. b) If the rule is observed, there is silence, discretion, mutual tolerance and mutual service, obedience in the subjects, kindness in the superiors: there is peace, which is nothing other than “the tranquility of order”. c) If the rule is observed, all the virtues are practiced: recollection, piety, mortification, humility, modesty, poverty, edification:’ there is general fervor. If the convent where the observance reigns is not yet heaven, it is at least its antechamber: “How good and how beautiful it is to dwell with the brethren as one” (Ps 132:1). (Ps 132:1) Where, on the contrary, if not from nonobservance, do all the troubles, revolts, opposition, parties and small or great scandals that disturb the order, the peace and the fervor of the communities come from?

3.

It is a PRINCIPLE OF STRENGTH AND INTERNAL VITALITY AND There are old orders that have preserved their youth for centuries because they have been obstinately faithful to their legislation, and in which one finds, as in their origin, an

unquenchable thirst for holiness together with the unbroken spirit of the founder. On the ancient trunk lives constantly the same tree full of vigor: the same sap, the same flowering and the same tasty fruits. The cult of the Rule is for the congregations what the sacraments and the liturgy are for the Church: a permanent source of graces. But at the very moment when observance weakens, the decline also begins. The rules and constitutions are for an order what rivers and canals are for the valley they irrigate and fertilize: they lower the water level, drought and sterility. Do we want to reform a relaxed order? It is enough to give it back its lost form, which was its soul, and to infuse it with a new external form.

Who does not now understand the responsibility of each religious in relation to his order? The institutes constitute a moral body whose members are the religious. If one of them is wounded, the whole organism suffers. Lukewarmness is as contagious as sanctity. The religious owes his order gratitude, obedience, love, filial piety and exquisite fidelity. All these sacred duties find their purest expression in perfect regularity, from which, precisely, are born in the order its joy, its strength, its internal and external vitality, its fullness of holiness and apostolate.

Chapter 4

LA

POVERTY

We will now approach the study of the three vows relative to the so-called “evangelical counsels,” which constitute the very essence of the religious state and of the other states ordered to acquire Christian perfection. We will divide the subject into two articles, dedicated, respectively, to the theory and practice of the vow of poverty. We will do the same in successive chapters with regard to the vows of chastity and obedience.

Article i

LA

THEORY

139. Evangelical poverty is based on the example of Jesus Christ, “who, though he was rich, yet for our sake became poor, so that we might be rich through his poverty” (2 Cor 8:9); on his divine teachings: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:3), and in his express invitation to those who wish to attain Christian perfection: “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, and come, follow me” (Mt 19:21). It properly consists in the voluntary abandonment of the riches and external goods of this world in order to seek God alone. Its perfect practice is a source of virtue, tranquility, peace and

joy. It has a high apostolic value as a good example, particularly for the poor.

C.4. Poverty

243

We will study the nature, necessity, excellence, advantages, enemies and sins against religious poverty in the modern world, enslaved by the insatiable craving for riches and comforts. We will study the nature, necessity, excellence, advantages, enemies and sins against religious poverty. 140, 1. Nature, Religious poverty does not consist in the mere lack of riches or material goods (effective poverty), but in the voluntary detachment or detachment from them (affective poverty). Mere effective poverty is neither good nor bad - rather it is an evil, from the purely human point of view -, being made good only by the honest or supernatural purpose with which it is voluntarily sought, when we do not have it, or tolerated and accepted when it is imposed on us against our own will. It is true, however, that effective poverty is a great help in arriving at affective poverty, since it is very difficult to possess an abundance of material goods without the heart being strongly attached to them. In the famous Gospel passage of the rich young man, Jesus Christ himself pointed out the fundamental features of evangelical poverty, whose public and official profession constitutes one of the three essential vows of the religious state: “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, and come, follow me” (Mt 19:21), From this formula the following fundamental elements of evangelical poverty emerge: a) It is not a precept necessary to be saved, but a counsel of perfection: “If you would….” b) It is a means to acquire perfection: “If you want to be perfect…” c) It demands the effective stripping of all wealth and external goods, without keeping

absolutely nothing for oneself, not even the price of the sale, which must be given to the poor. “d) And all this in order to imitate and follow Christ perfectly, which is the positive goal of the evangelical counsels and of the whole Christian life: “Come, follow me”.

Evangelical poverty consists, then, essentially in exterior renunciation and, above all, in interior detachment from all affection for material goods, in order to follow and imitate the poor Christ as perfectly as possible and thus attain the full perfection of charity. We will return to these concepts throughout this chapter. Necessity* The vow of poverty is one of the three vows which essentially constitute the religious state,

In reasoning for this necessity of the vow of poverty, the Angelic Doctor writes with his usual clarity and lucidity:1 2 “We have said that the religious state is an apprenticeship and an exercise to attain the perfection of charity. To reach it, it is necessary to totally destroy attachment to the things of the world, for St. Augustine says, addressing God: “He loves you less who loves something outside of you and does not love it for you”. And in another place: “The diminution of the desire for temporal things nourishes and nourishes charity; the total extinction of that desire is the perfection of charity”. For it is evident that from the possession of earthly things is born the soul’s attachment to them. That is why St. Augustine says: “The goods of the earth are loved more when they are possessed than when they are desired. For why did the young man in the Gospel go away sorrowful, except because he had great riches? (cf. Mt 19:22). It is one thing not to consent to appropriate what one does not have,

and quite another to abandon what one already has. In the first case, one rejects something foreign; in the second, it is almost one's own members that must be torn away". And St. John Chrysostom says that "the increase of riches kindles the flame more and makes its desire more vehement." Therefore, to attain the perfection of charity, the first foundation is voluntary poverty, so that one lives without possessing anything, for the Lord says: "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and come, follow me" (Mt 19:21).

From this magnificent doctrine the following should be emphasized: i. That poverty is not an end, but only a very convenient means to reach the perfection of charity and, in the case of wanting to reach it through the religious life, absolutely necessary and indispensable. But since poverty admits many degrees and modalities, that degree or modality will be more convenient that best leads the soul to the perfection of charity, according to the spirit, the norms, and the end of the religious order or institute itself.

zP That in order to attain the perfection of charity it is necessary to totally destroy attachment to the things of the world. It is not only a question of the effective renunciation of earthly riches and goods, but above all of affective detachment and total detachment of the heart. There are legions of religious who practice a purely exterior, material poverty, which has nothing or very little to do with virtue. They live in a state of poverty, without thinking about it, without wanting it, perhaps unconsciously. To be poor without wanting it or against their will is not virtue, but simple destitution or misery. Where there is no free will there is no virtue. Only he is virtuously poor who truly wants to be poor, who practices and loves poverty from his heart for love of the poor Christ. 1 Cf. 2*2,186,3 and 7* 2 2*2,186,3.

3.0 That effective or material poverty is a great help to affective or spiritual poverty, in which virtue properly consists. It would be a great illusion to renounce material poverty or to undervalue it more than is right, under the pretext that the only virtuous poverty is affective poverty. In practice, it is almost impossible to be truly poor in spirit without also being materially poor, given the innate inclination of the human heart to be attached to the things of the earth. What else did Christ himself mean when he said that it is more difficult for a rich man to be saved than for a thread to pass through 'the depths of a needle' (cf. Mt 19:24)? (cf. Mt 19:24). 142. 3. The excellence of poverty. The practice of poverty of spirit for love of God is one of the most excellent virtues that can be practiced and, paradoxically enough, one of the virtues that most resembles God, infinitely rich and infinitely poor at the same time. God, in fact," writes Colin 3, "reveals himself as the richest and the poorest of beings, and poor precisely because he is infinitely rich. God's richness consists in the possession and eternal enjoyment of himself, infinite in his nature, in his perfections, in his glory. God needs nothing and no one. He is sufficient. Nothing adds to the universe'to its essential fullness; and even if the world were reduced to nothing, it would not thereby be diminished or impoverished. The Divinity has in itself all richness. Therefore, before the Creator the whole of creation is as nothing-tamquam nihilum ante fe (Ps 3 8:6)-because God desires nothing and has need of nothing. Rich because He is everything and because He has everything, God is also poor inspiritii, because He is bound to nothing. Can man be at the same time, like God, rich and poor? Undoubtedly yes. If our poverty is in the first place a brilliant homage to the divine fullness, more than a

testimony, it is a reason for imitation and participation in that fullness. j How rich is the soul that is filled with God to overflowing! To want, desire, and seek only God, and, "once found, to be content with Him, to lay his hand on Him, as a miser does with his treasure; to take full possession of Him, to fill with Him all the capacity of his soul, of his heart and of his will; to immerse himself in Him, to take pleasure in Him, to be satisfied in Him, to be filled with Him, to be filled with the fullness of his soul, his heart and his will. To take full possession of Him, to fill with Him the whole capacity of his soul, his heart and his will; to immerse himself in Him, to take pleasure in Him, to enjoy Him, exclaiming: Deus meus et.omnia! (My God and all my things) Is this not the only true wealth? Rich as God, because God is his wealth. Those who possess God are rich, but those who possess only God are richer 4. *And suddenly, here we are poor, totally, universally, admirably poor, after the example of the heavenly Father; poor in spiritu, that is to say, detached from everything. If I am the owner and proprietor of God, why do I need creatures, why ask, if I am satiated with the infinite? The pe2 lost in the abysses of the ocean, does he look at the puddles of salt water? He who possesses God can pass without many, without all things. "For whose love-claims r3 Colín, £* cult, de ios votos (Madrid 1949) p. 175-176. < P. Fabcr, Btó c.2 p.r20.

St. Paul-I sacrifice all things and hold them as dung, if only I may gain Christ" (Phil 3:8). And he added: "As those who have nothing, possessing everything" (2 Cor 6:10).

It is the same thing that our great Saint Teresa knew how to express in that well-known verse: Whoever lacks God lacks

nothing, God alone is enough!

In her admirable Way of Perfection, St. Teresa ponders the excellencies of poverty with great persuasive force 5 6: “It is a good that all the goods of the world contain in itself; it is a great lordship. What is given to me of kings and lords, if I do not want their revenues? Nor of keeping them happy, if even a little should happen to displease God in something for them? Nor what is given to me of their honors, if I understand what it is to be very honorable for a poor person, which is to be truly poor? I believe that honor and money almost always go together, and that he who wants honor does not hate money, and that he who hates it is given little honor. Let this be well understood, for it seems to me that honor always brings with it some interest in income or money, because no wonder there is an honest man in the world if he is poor before, even if he is poor in himself, they hold him in little. True poverty brings with it a burden that no one can bear; the poverty that is taken for God alone, I say, has no need to please anyone but Him, and it is a very certain thing that no one needs to have many friends. I have seen it well from experience”.

143. 4. Advantages of poverty. Apart from its sovereign excellence, there are incalculable advantages of every kind that religious poverty brings with it when it is practiced in a truly evangelical spirit. Here are some of the most important ones: I.° It is AN INCESANTE CULT TO DIVINE PROVIDENCE, To have nothing, to desire nothing, to ask only for today our daily bread, to expect everything from God without worrying little or much about tomorrow, is it not, perhaps, a magnificent cult to divine Providence and an impressive proof of our omnipotent confidence in the paternal goodness of God? He who takes care of the birds and the flowers of the field, will he forget mankind? (cf. Mt 6:25-34).

” Our Father, who art in heaven!” More than anyone else, the poor man has the right to repeat this prayer every day with faith, trust, love and complete abandonment. Is not he doubly his Father whom he calls the “Father of 5 St. Teresa, Way of Perfection c.2 n.s-6. 6 The saint does not mean to say that the poor are not good and worthy of honor, but that they rarely earn it from others, since poverty is ordinarily disdained (note by Fr. Silveri o).

i There, who will ever count the attentions, the delicacies, the singular kindnesses of this Father with his little ones, voluntarily disinherited, who have only kept their heart to love him and their voice to pray and praise him? The poor man will not lack his daily piece of bread: Jo knows this very well, he is sure of it, that is why he does not worry. If the heavenly Father takes care of the little bird and the grass of the fields and gives to the one his grain of wheat and to the other his drop of dew, how can he forget him, the One who always hears the call of the poor? (Ps 10:17). “I am poor and needy, Yahweh will take care of me” (Ps 39:18). The prayer of the poor, all imbued with humility and trust, is always heard. At the gates of divine mercy, the best clients, never rejected, are the poor” 7. 2.0

Faith is exercised by rejecting the world’s criterion-which gives so much importance to riches-and by accepting God’s point of view, which urges us to total detachment from all material things. Hope is strengthened by abandoning to God all our preoccupation with temporal things, leaving to him the care of the birds of the air or the herbs of the field. Charity, finally, is kindled more and more in the love of the Father, who with such tenderness and solicitude attends to

his children as to the pupils of his eyes (cf. Deut 32:10; Ps 16:S).

3.0 Strengthen humility. The ‘poor man has nothing to be proud of here on earth. For this reason, voluntary poverty is intimately related to true humility, to the point that it is worth asking whether one of them might not be the most beautiful form of the other. St. Thomas expressly warns that voluntary poverty-in imitation of Christis an indication of the greatest humility.

4.0 Exercise mortification. The poor often lack what is useful and even what is necessary: “The Rule, with its prescriptions and prohibitions concerning furnishings, clothing and food, constitutes in itself a true program of austerity. It is forbidden, without authorization, in virtue of the vow of poverty, to appropriate anything, to use anything, to receive anything and to give anything. And does not detachment from everything created not imply the death of all human and natural desires? To practice poverty is always to deprive oneself, and to deprive oneself is to mortify oneself” (Colin). -S.° It increases the freedom of spirit. No one is more free and unburdened than the voluntarily poor:

“Divine poverty is the mother of true freedom. To be bound is to be a prisoner; therefore, he who allows himself to be seized by wealth becomes7 Colín, o.c. p.191. s Cf. 3,40,3 ad 3.

And though his chains may be gilded, they are still chains. To break, on the contrary, all bonds, is it not to free oneself? After God, no one here on earth is so sovereignly free as the poor: nothing holds him and he is subject to nothing. To

anxiously seek the goods of the earth is to descend, to lower oneself and confess one's dependence and misery. To despise and renounce them is to rise, to exalt oneself and to affirm their independence and abundance; it is to proclaim that one is greater than the whole world and that there is only one being above us, of whom we need God: God" (Colin).

6.°

GIVES US A HUNDREDFOLD IN THIS WORLD AND THEN

according to the promise of Jesus Christ (cf. Me io, 29-30). The religious, in fact, finds in the resources of his institute, in the company of his brothers and in the paternal esteem of his superiors much more than what he had left in this world; and he becomes worthy, moreover, not only of the kingdom of heaven promised to poverty of spirit (cf. Mt. 5:3), but to occupy in it a place of exception and privilege (cf. Mt. 19, eternal life,

27-30).

Such, in general terms, are the principal advantages of evangelical poverty, which has always been considered by all the holy founders as "the most solid bulwark of religious life, its best defensive wall, the principle which strengthens it interiorly and gives it its apostolic fruitfulness. With the history of the religious orders in hand it can be demonstrated to the point of evidence that God blesses them greatly and they walk with the maximum prosperity as long as they succeed in conserving the spirit of authentic evangelical poverty; but when this spirit weakens and penetrates the spirit of the world, friend of comfort and gift, relaxation and decadence come quickly. How many illustrious monasteries found their ruin in the riches, from

which they did not know how to defend themselves! Nothing should the subjects be so careful as the dear and loving practice of the strictest evangelical poverty; and on nothing else should the vigilance and energy of the superiors be so great as not to permit, under any pretext, the introduction of abuses in the matter of poverty, which would soon destroy religious discipline and bring their order, or the house over which they preside, to the verge of complete ruin and relaxation. 144. 5. Enemies of poverty. Precisely because it is an austere and mortifying virtue, religious poverty has a multitude of interior and exterior enemies. I have

Here, without glosses or comments, is a list of the most important 9: 1.

The natural inclination to possess something as pro diametrically opposed to religious poverty, that absolutely nothing can be possessed in property. pious,

2. The naturalistic spirit, which urges us to follow the criteria of the world regarding poverty, instead of the maxims of the Gospel, which are completely antagonistic and opposed.

3.0 Pride, which has an instinctive horror of all that demeans and humiliates in the eyes of the world. The world places the poor on the lowest rung of the social ladder. 4.0 Self-comfort, which refuses the thousand discomforts inherent in the perfect practice of religious poverty. 5,0

A deficient formation on the importance of religious poverty and its decisive influence on the path of our sanctification.

6º The bad example of those around us, extraordinarily contagious for weak and petty spirits: “Why this one yes and the others no? Is there in our order two kinds of poverty?” As if the bad example of some or of many would authorize anyone to break the rule that we have promised to keep before God. 7.0

The

The negligence of superiors, who through weakness, human respect, misunderstood kindness, etc., allow abuses of poverty to go uncorrected and unpunished, or-what is a thousand times worse-positively encourage them by their bad example. 8.°

The

material prosperity of many religious households-about

especially those destined for schools and student residences, where luxury and modern comfort are often on a par with the best first-class hotels. Living in such an atmosphere of refined comfort, how can religious observe the austere demands of evangelical poverty? FALSE CRITERIA REGARDING RELIGIOUS POVERTYThere are innumerable false criteria that comfort and lack of true spirit have introduced among religious regarding poverty. Here are some of the most important ones: Q.°

GIOSA.

Cf. Colín” o.c.

P.204SS.

P.Ill. Ascetical-mystical aspect of religious life -I have a vow of poverty, but not of misery.

Answer: To imitate the heroic poverty of Christ, the vow of misery is not necessary; the vow of poverty, well understood and practiced, is sufficient.

CA. f^a poverty

matter, always assuming the necessary warning and consent to sin.

2. a What matter is required as a minimum to sin mortally against the vow of poverty? It is generally admitted - Up to such an amount the vow is not broken in grave matter. that the same amount is necessary as for mortal sin Answer: (What.horror! (As if venial sin had no import-against the seventh commandment.

If it were permitted to trample on virtue, so as not to break the vow!

-It is better to buy good things, even if they are expensive, because they last longer. In the long run, cheap things are expensive. Answer; The vow and virtue of poverty do not oblige us to save money, but to live poorly, which is not the same thing. If it is necessary to spend more money, we should not hesitate to do so. We must put money at the service of virtue and not virtue at the service of money. To do otherwise would be tantamount to inverting true values and to suffering a regrettable confusion between the material and the formal aspects of virtue.

-My superiors do not set an example for me. Answer; What about you? They will answer to God; but their disedifying or scandalous conduct does not authorize you to imitate them. Never forget that your superiors are your superiors, but not your models: your model is Christ, who never gave any bad example to anyone against any virtue.

Sins against the vow and virtue of poverty. As Valuy 10 well warns, the religious cannot ignore: i.° That the violation of the vow of poverty and of the other vows is grave by its nature (although it admits parity of matter, except in the vow of chastity). 2º That to sin mortally against the vow it is enough, according to Suarez, the matter that would constitute mortal sin "if it were retained after having made a vow to give it to the poor. 3.0 That in order to sin mortally against justice, in the case of the goods of the community, a greater amount is required than that which is considered grave in an ordinary theft or harm done to a stranger. A serene and balanced exposition of this matter, often so confused by moralists, can be found in the excellent little work on the religious state, published by the Brothers of the Christian Schools. 1 ^ 1.a The vow of poverty obliges, like the other vows, to mortal or venial sin, according to the gravity or seriousness of the vow.

10 11

Cf. Valuy, Las virtudes del religioso (Barcelona r<>>3r) p.36. Cf. Tratado breve del estado religioso (Madrid 1961) n.201-202.

It is not easy to determine this amount. Ordinarily, the situation of the injured party must be taken into account. It is easy to understand that it does not cause the same harm to steal the same amount from a poor worker as from a very rich man. But one must also bear in mind the offence committed against the right to property and against the social order, which are independent of the fortune of the person who has been the victim of the theft or the unjust injury. Hence the distinction established by moralists between relatively serious and absolutely serious matters. On the other hand, money, far from having a fixed value, varies according to countries and times. At present it has

suffered in almost all countries an extraordinary depreciation. It is very difficult, therefore, to evaluate with mathematical exactitude the necessary and sufficient matter to constitute a serious offense against justice.

3. a It is commonly affirmed that a sum equivalent to the average daily wage of an ordinary skilled worker (understood as a person who lives by his work), that is to say, the daily expenses required for the support of himself and his family, can be considered as a relatively serious matter. 4. a Many moralists consider religious, in relation to their community, as children of a family in relation to their parents. And for the theft done by a son to his parents to constitute grave matter, they generally admit that twice as much is required as for ordinary theft, because the goods of his parents belong to him in some way. 5. a Several petty thefts, each of which constitutes a venial fault against the vow of poverty, do not normally constitute grave sin as a whole; unless they are petty thefts quite close together and committed with the intention of reaching a certain amount of relative importance (e.g., for the purpose of providing a certain object), as a consequence of the moral bond that unites all these petty thefts. 6. a By breaking his vow of poverty, the religious also sins against justice-by violating the seventh commandment-if he injures the community or his neighbor in his goods. In this case he is obliged to make restitution: either directly, if he has personal goods (as in the case of the professed of simple vows), or indirectly, if he does not have them (e.g., with the help of a lawyer), or indirectly, if he does not have them (e.g., with the help of a lawyer).

(unless, in order to obtain it, he would have to defame himself, to which no one is obliged; but in any case, he could obtain it from the superior through his confessor, under sacramental secrecy concerning the guilty person). 7. Every offense against the vow of poverty, as against the other vows of religion, has the malice of sacrilege, since a commitment contracted with God is violated. However, this sacrilege can be slight in the matter of poverty, when it is a question of a small fault committed against the vow. Peinador gives the following norms 12: 1. a A grave sin against the virtue of religion, and proportionally against the virtue of fidelity in the case of the promise to observe poverty, is every act which, in relation to justice, would constitute mortal sin. 2. a A grave offense against the obligation of poverty in the states of perfection is that act or group of acts which in itself is notably disdainful of the mortified and humble way of being, proper to the state of perfection and, in particular, of the institute, according to its specific purpose. The difficulty lies in getting right what really deviates notably from the humble way of being of those who profess perfection in the religious life or in secular institutes. Obvious cases can be imagined; for example, that of the religious in simple vows who would dispose of his own goods so freely that in his housing, food, clothing, travel, treatment, etc., he would seem more like a rich lord than a poor religious. Or that of another who, behind the back of his superiors, habitually lives mixed with people of the world, on trips, banquets, summer vacations, parties, etc., luxuriously provided with everything, by fraudulent means, without material detriment to his institute. However, since it is quite clear that these obvious cases, because they are extreme, cannot be frequent, in order to be able to determine the exact classification of those that are most likely to occur, it will be necessary to take into account, principally, the manner in which in each religious or secular institute the practice of poverty is legitimately observed. This will be

known by the traditionally accepted customs, by the letter of the constitutions, by the circulars of the superiors, by the notices and corrections of the chapters, *etc.* The very nature of the act or set of acts in question will, on many occasions, tell by itself whether or not there is great repugnance between what it represents and the manner of religious poverty that is practiced in the institute".

12 15

Cf. Peinador, Teología morol de los estodos de perfección n.211-212. We say deto or set of acts, because it is important to qualify not only the isolated acts, but also the attitudes or habitual ways. In fact, there are acts against the virtue of poverty and habitual ways of living contrary to the poverty of the states of perfection. This relative aspect cannot be disregarded. Thus, it can very well happen that

Article 2

The exercise and practice of evangelical poverty offered to God by means of a solemn vow obliges the religious to these three fundamental things: 1. not to possess abso/utamenttly anything as his own. 2. not to dispose abso/utamenttly of anything without the permission of the competent superior. 3. to live poorly.

The first two obligations are relatively easy to fulfill. The third, on the other hand, which is by far the most important of all, is fraught with practical difficulties and involves real heroism. Let us examine each of these three fundamental obligations separately. i.a

Own absolutely nothing

147. This obligation constitutes the very essence of the evangelical counsel of poverty. The possession of anything, however small and insignificant it may be, as true property of which the religious can freely dispose without the permission of his superiors, would destroy the totality of the renunciation demanded by Christ himself in the Gospel: “If you would be perfect, go, sell all that you have and give to the poor” (Mt 19:21). The totality of detachment cannot be proclaimed in a more emphatic way. No one is obliged-apart from very special circumstances, as we have explained below-to follow the evangelical counsel of total poverty, since it is a counsel and not a precept. But, once it has been voluntarily accepted, we cannot change or attenuate it at will. The renunciation of earthly goods must be absolute and total, otherwise we may give the illusion that we are practicing an evangelical counsel when in reality we are very far from it or we practice it only in a very incomplete and imperfect way. To appropriate an object is to take it, keep it, receive it, borrow it, or buy it without the permission of the superior, which are the five ways of breaking the vow of poverty by this first act, which in any religious or member of the states of perfection is against the vow of poverty, in some - for example, in a Carmelite nun or in a Little Sister of the Cross - is a notable departure from the humility and mortification they profess; while in others it is not so notable, for example, in a nun who teaches in a well-off environment.

chapter, since all of them presuppose an act of ownership independent of superiors. In virtue of these principles and

obligations imposed on him by his vow of poverty, a religious who seriously aspires to the perfection of his state will strive to observe with the utmost delicacy the following practical norms: 1, a

Not to use anything in the spirit of ownership 15.

148. a) The religious must be convinced that he is a true poor man who lives on alms. b) He must regard all the goods of the community as consecrated to God and exclusively his own, and show himself to be recognized for all that he receives from his liberality. c) He will not write his name or put his initials on any object, except on his private clothing if, for reasons of hygiene, it is customary in his order or religious institute. d) He will not be attached to anything that he has for his own use. He will willingly consent that others take advantage of it or that the superior take it away from him when and as he wishes, giving him in this, as in everything else, complete and absolute freedom. “Imagine,” said St. Ignatius, “a statue that allows itself to be successively adorned and stripped without anger and without resistance: so must the religious be. If you suffer when a habit or a book is taken away from you, when you are ordered to change your cell, you give proof that you are not truly poor, because it is very easy to let go of what you have without attachment.

Often, indeed, we believe ourselves to be completely indifferent in relation to an object, precisely when we are most concerned and fear to be deprived of it; and if it is in fact taken from us, our heart bleeds at once, the more painful the wound being the more vivid and deep roots it had taken in it. A man who has been tightly bound in his sleep does not feel the chains until the moment he wakes up, and it is only when a tooth is pulled out that we realize how tightly it was fastened to the gums.

2. a

To follow in all common life.

The Canon Code prescribes the following regarding the common life: “In all religions, the common life is to be diligently observed by all, even in those things that pertain to food, clothing and furnishings. t 5.

C.4. Poverty

Everything acquired by the religious, including the superiors…, should be incorporated into the goods of the house, province or religion, and any money and all titles should be deposited in the common treasury. The trousseau of the religious must be in keeping with the poverty they have professed”) (en.594), “In houses of studies perfect common life must flourish; otherwise, students cannot be promoted to orders” (01.587,2.°). “Those religious who violate in a notable matter the law of common life prescribed in the constitutions should be severely admonished; and if they do not mend their ways, they should also be punished by deprivation of active and passive voice, and if they are superiors, also by deprivation of office” (en. 2389).

In virtue of the obligation of the common life, in religious communities everything is common to all and nothing belongs particularly to anyone. No one is the owner of anything, but simply the user of what is given to him personally. There is no such thing as “mine” and “yours”. No one is the absolute owner neither of his cell, nor of his furniture, nor of his habits, nor even of a book or a pen. He has the use of these things, but not the ownership. And a use that is not even exclusive, since it always depends on the good will of the superiors, who can take back tomorrow what they have granted today 16. “The common life,” writes

Father Peinador i. “is the way of having, according to which, all that is acquired by the religious, or by the members of the states of perfection with common life, or by the institution itself, forms a single fund, from which all are supplied with what they need to eat, to dress, to work, keeping uniformity and adjusting to what poverty demands.... The religious in solemn vows cannot acquire anything for himself, since the solemn vow excludes all property, even imperfect and radical property. Therefore, whatever such a religious acquires by any means whatsoever, becomes part of the goods of his religion, according to the norms of law. Simple vows do not exclude radical property. What goods can constitute the patrimony or increase it, as the case may be, of the religious in simple vows, or of the member of institutes of conjuration or promise of poverty, must, in the last analysis, be deduced from the constitutions. In any case, it is a general principle that whatever the religious acquires by his work or industry, or out of respect for religion, he acquires for religion. This principle applies to all institutes in which the common life is guarded”.

It is very important to note that the common life does not refer exclusively to the vow of poverty, but also and principally to the unity and harmony of hearts. St. Augustine begins the exposition of his marvelous monastic rule with these words: “The first thing for which you have come together as one’ is that you may dwell in the monastery in one accord and be of one heart and soul in God”.

Cf. Colín, o.c, p.25S* 17 Cf. Peinador, Teología moral de los estados de perfección (Madrid 1959) p.301.

We will return to this at length when we speak of fraternal charity. Common life is one of the most powerful means of sanctification that religious life places at the service of its members. “Zalba 18 writes in this regard, that common life, in the sense of cohabitation under the same roof, is a great element for the life of perfection. St. John Berchmans, a saint who had no other peculiar note in his holiness than that of having lived the vows and the rules of his institute, with his fidelity to the point of heroism in both, repeated, however, that his greatest mortification was the common life. Those who live it with exact fidelity will understand this without being surprised. To adjust oneself in everything to the determination of the superiors in schedule, food, clothing, attendance to the general acts/place of the house where one has to be, recreation, etc., if in the short run it can be easy, in the long run it supposes an enormous spirit of sacrifice-excellent inflammable material for charity-and a great abnegation of oneself, by not seeking pretext to excuse or exempt oneself, but on the contrary. Religious who have lived in missions without the subjection of the common life testify to this; and secular priests, who so rarely follow the advice of canon 134, give the same glimpse.... This community life, however favored it may be in religious houses thanks to the common life, however recommended it may be in the testament of Jesus and however necessary it may be given the functions that the religious element plays in the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, is in our days especially threatened. Individualism, the spirit of independence, freedom in thinking and expressing oneself as sincerity, a misunderstood sense of democracy, a languid faith that habitually recognizes in the superior the representative of God, forgetting his human limitations, the lack of interior life indispensable for the sacrifice of selfishness for the sake of a sense of community and fraternal charity?These and other causes mean that today we miss the veneration of traditions and statutes, the filial respect for the the statutes, the filial

respect for superiors', the collaboration that often has to be lost in anonymity, the sharing of the same life-giving spirit that manifests itself in what was the filled joy of St. Paul, in "feeling the same thing, having the same charity, being of one mind, aspiring to the same thing" (Phil 2:2); in a word, the conscious and consistent possession of Jesus Christ, according to his desires: "I in them... so that they may be consummated in them.... that they may be consummated in unity" (Phil 17:23). 3.a To renounce absolutely every kind of peculium, perfect or imperfect.

150* The greatest enemy of common life and one of the most serious offenses against religious poverty is undoubtedly the so-called peculium. By this is understood a certain amount of money or any temporal thing that can be valued in money, received by the religious for his own private use, and which he can dispose of more or less independently of his own private use.

Cf, Proceedings of the National Congress of Perfection and Apostolate vol.3 (Madrid 1958).

p.4S2r4S3.'

of his superior. If the latter cannot revoke the peculium once granted, it is a perfect peculium; otherwise, it is an imperfect peculium. There is no doubt that the perfect peculium is totally contrary to the vow of poverty. The imperfect peculium is not entirely opposed to the vow, oath or promise, inasmuch as it does not presuppose the use of goods in full independence of the superior; but it is certainly contrary to the perfection of the common life and must be avoided at all costs. Superiors who introduce it where it is

not practiced, or who do not try to uproot it where it has already succeeded in being introduced, incur the gravest responsibility before God, who will ask them to give a close account of this great abuse, which leads directly to the relaxation of religious discipline in a basic and fundamental point. 4. a Not to hide or keep anything under lock and key so that it cannot be taken by the superior rgr. “Let the use of keys and locks be unknown among us,” says St. Jerome, “to show that our only treasure and our only possession is Jesus Christ” (Rule),

For the rest, everything is secured by two strictly precepted rules: one that forbids entry into a strange room and another that forbids taking anything out of it. These are our locks and our keys. He sins against the vow of poverty who hides something for fear that, if the superior finds it, he may take it, even if he has had permission to keep it, because he wants to keep it against the will of the superior, or at least to dispose of it in a spirit of ownership. The Christians of the primitive Church sold their goods and placed their value at the feet of the apostles; and they did so, say St. Cyprian and St. Basil, in virtue of the vow of poverty that they made out of devotion. Anamas and Sapphira hid part of the value of their goods and the Lord punished them with sudden death (cf. Act 5:r~n). One day St. Gregory the pope was consulted about the conduct to be observed with a sick religious in whose possession some money was found: “Let no one visit him,” replied the saint; “treat him as one excommunicated. If he dies unrepentant, throw his body and his money on a dunghill with this curse: Let your money be for your perdition”. In similar cases, this was the practice of the ancient monks. 5. a Not to give or borrow, not to keep deposits, not to be surety for anything or anyone.

152. They are true contracts which presuppose a right and reveal an act of ownership. 19 On this point and on the

following three, we quote verbatim from Father Valuy" o.c. p. 22-29. Religious life

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If a person is unable to give or receive anything, he must be considered incapable of lending or borrowing. However, the fault of the one who borrows or receives from strangers is lesser than that of the one who gives or lends to them; lesser and simply venial, if the loan made to strangers is only for use, having complete certainty that the object is to be returned soon and without grave harm to the community which for a moment is deprived of it. Lesser still if the fact takes place between religious of the same community, in things of little importance not included in the general permissions. It cannot be given in deposit neither to the laity nor to the religious themselves. There is no difference between hiding money or any other object in his possession and hiding money or any other object in the possession of a friend. With the exception of those things which he has for his own use, and of which it is licit for the religious to dispose; in this case they can, without lacking poverty, be given to another religious for safekeeping.

6º Not to apply to other uses what has been granted for a specific use or employment. 153. What has been received for a limited time may not be withheld indefinitely, nor may that which is designated for a certain individual be given to another, nor may that which is destined for a fixed place be taken to another place. Nor is it licit to appropriate or give to the poor-without the permission of the superior-the fund of savings made for food and other expenses of one's own

person. The superior is free to limit the permissions; consequently, it will be an act of property more or less culpable to exceed in this matter. When changing one's residence, one can take only what is authorized by custom or by the express permission of the superior, even if the object one wishes to take is from another house or from strangers. It is well known that relics of saints and manuscripts do not fall under the vow of poverty, and the author may dispose of them before his death.[20] When traveling, one cannot procure, except for particular needs, that which one would refuse at home. Nothing may be bought, not even for the community, unless the object is of little value, or very useful and difficult to find, and it can be presumed that it is of little value, or very useful and difficult to find.

20 It is evident, however, that manuscripts composed at the expense of one's own order or institute or for the common good constitute a matter of the vow of poverty. There is in this sense a resolution of the Sacred Congregation of Religious of July 13, 1913 (AAS 5 [1913] p. 366). The same is to be said about works of art; musical compositions, paintings, sculptures, *etc.*

authorization. Nor may he deviate from the appointed itinerary to visit a friend or to see a curiosity, unless the distance and the expenses to be incurred are not considerable, for he exposes himself to the danger of sinning against poverty and obedience. If on the way a religious is given a sum of money, or anything else, he should know that it belongs to the house to which obedience is destined, as if it had been received by the superior of that house.

When he arrives at the point of destination, he must hand over the surplus of what he was given for travel expenses, with a detailed account, if he is required to do so. 7.” Not to cause voluntary injury by destroying or allowing the goods of the community to be lost.

154. In fact, it is not the property that is given to the religious, but the use of the things placed at his disposal. It is like the guests,” says Father Rodriguez, “they are free to eat the delicacies served to them as guests, but not to sell them, to take them away or to waste them. When one has the charge of providing for the needs of the community as a treasurer, grocer, clothier, cook or purchaser, one should put into the office the reasonable care that prudent men of the world put into their business, convinced that the frequent small damages, children of negligence and which are equivalent to positive acts, can constitute, considered as a whole, a considerable harm and, therefore, in some cases, a grave sin against the vow of poverty. One cannot sell, nor buy, nor exchange by one’s own authority and outside of the powers given to him, an object, whatever it may be, not even under the pretext of real and true benefit for the community. He must conform to the rules, to the customs and to the prescriptions of the superior. Officers who, with disregard for the rule, give sometimes more and sometimes less, sometimes going as far as what is superfluous, sometimes falling short of what is necessary, and having no other counsel than their own whim, as if they were owners, masters and absolute lords of everything, are more or less opposed to the vow of poverty. If by simple negligence of the religious who is not in charge of watching over the goods of the house’ some harm is done to those goods, the religious does not sin against the vow, but he does sin against the virtue of poverty. For what can be thought *of a religious who has the most solicitous care of the goods of which he has the most solicitous care?

He serves himself and in the meantime he lets perish, without scruple of any kind, the goods of the poor of Christ? One sins against the vow of poverty by not wanting to receive to pass on to the community what he has already acquired, such as legacies, pensions, fees, donations accepted, although not yet given, etc.; and one will only sin against charity by not accepting, without plausible reasons, that to which neither the religious nor the community has a strict, real and positive right, such as alms, gifts, *etc.* In hospices, colleges, orphanages and other establishments entrusted to communities, the harm caused by negligence or by too arbitrary administration, hardly ceases to be a sin against justice and against the vow. By obliging themselves to use only for the good of the work the goods they have placed in their hands, and to appropriate nothing individually, except fees and legitimate compensation, these communities reserve to themselves a certain freedom of action, 2.

Do not dispose of anything at all without permission of the superior

155. This second obligation imposed on the religious by his vow of poverty is a simple consequence of the previous one and follows spontaneously from it. If the religious can possess absolutely nothing as his own; if all that is granted to him for his use is not his own, but that of the order or institute to which he belongs, it follows that he can dispose of absolutely nothing without the permission of the competent superior, who will give or withhold it, not in his own name-he cannot do so either-but in the name of the order or institute he represents, which is the true owner of

all that the religious possesses, whether they are superiors or subjects. To dispose of an object as one's own is to give, sell, exchange or lend it without the permission of the superior, or to allow it to be lost or damaged through carelessness or culpable negligence. With any of these things one sins against the vow or virtue of poverty. This leads us to examine the interesting question of the different permissions or licenses that the subject must obtain from his superiors so that he can perform some act of property without violating the vow or the virtue of poverty21 . 21

Cf.

Brief treatise on the religious state 0.203-205.

 a)

Notion of license or permit

15^ With regard to religious poverty, license or permission is understood as the authorization of the legitimate superior to carry out validly and licitly some act of property which, without it, would be contrary to the vow or virtue of poverty. It is evident that every act of property, from the moment it is executed with legitimate permission, ceases to be sin against the vow or virtue; because the religious no longer acts as owner, but subject to the dependence of his superior; to the latter, therefore, such an act can and must be attributed. b)

Its different types

157. Permission, as is evident, is related to obedience and religious poverty. It can be considered in terms of the

substance of what is authorized and in terms of the manner of authorizing it.

i. Considered in itself, that is, in regard to the substance of what is authorized, the permission can be: a) Valid, if the superior has the power or faculty to grant it according to his own rule and constitutions. b) Invalid or null, if it exceeds the powers of the superior, or has been obtained from him by fraud, deceit or violence. A superior who knowingly grants permissions that are beyond his authority sins against the vow of poverty, and such permissions are null and void. The inferior who makes use of them also sins, if he knows of their nullity. In case of doubt it must be presumed that the superior has not exceeded his right. The permission is also invalid or null if it is obtained by fraud or false information, alleging, for example, false reasons of health, greatly exaggerating the true reasons, or keeping silent or concealing certain circumstances that, if the superior had known them, he would not have granted the requested permission. Permits obtained by extortion, that is, obtained by means of some kind of violence, have no more value than fraudulent permits. The superior, for example, is pestered; one resorts, depending on the case, to promises, murmurings, threats; one even provokes interventions of persons foreign to the order or institute ({enormous abuse!), *etc.* In order to get rid of such importunities and perhaps avoid a greater evil, the superior ends up by reluctantly granting what is asked of him. This permission is illegitimate and cannot be used with peace of conscience.

c)

Permission granted for just reasons is lawful.

d)

Illicit is the one granted without sufficient cause or reason.

Note that a valid permit is not the same as an unlawful permit, nor is an invalid permit the same as an unlawful permit. A permit is always valid if it does not exceed the superior's authority.

And so, for example, when the superior grants permission to make certain manifestly excessive expenditures (e.g., to buy a curious object, but of little use, to travel without necessity in luxury, etc.), the superior does not sin against the vow of poverty, since he has not exceeded the limits of his faculties, but has not exceeded the limits of his faculties, For example, when a superior grants permission to make certain expenses that are manifestly superiors (e.g., to buy a curious object, but of little use, to travel without necessity in luxury, etc.), neither the superior sins against the vow of poverty, since he has not exceeded the limits of his faculties, nor the inferior, because he acts with dependence; but both of them sin against the virtue of poverty and, consequently, the permission is illicit, although valid" It is supposed that it is not a question of important amounts (for example, those that exceed the attributions of a certain superior), because in this case the permission would be, besides being illicit, invalid.

e) lawful".

2"°

Legitimate is the permission that is both valid and

Considered in terms of the manner of giving it, the

a) Express permission (also called “express permission”, which is granted by the superior formally giving it or without requesting it by the same general subject to all his subjects); b) General permission (also called “general permission”, which is granted by the superior formally giving it or without requesting it to all his subjects).

explicit or formal) is the one who, by word or in writing, pi(granting, e.g., a permit to perform such and such a thing).

This is the surest permission of all-provided it is legitimate or valid and lawful-and the one that every good religious should seek to obtain whenever possible.

b) Virtual or implicit is the permission not expressly formulated by the superior, but which is implicitly contained in another express permission. For example, the religious authorized to travel, is also authorized for the expenses that the trip demands; not only the absolutely indispensable ones, but also the other reasonable expenses that in similar circumstances are allowed to persons of modest condition or, better yet, the religious of exemplary conduct.

c) Tacit (also called presumed present) is the permission not expressly granted or included in some formal act of the superior, but that can be reasonably deduced from his silence, assuming that it would be easy for him to protest in case of not being in agreement. This silence is, in this case, equivalent to consent. This permission is considered to exist, e.g., when something is received, withheld, or given in view of or with knowledge of the superior, which the superior could easily and freely forbid to receive, withhold, or give to another person. But if the superior’s silence were clearly due to weakness, prudence or moral coercion (e.g., for not daring to contradict the person who offers the religious a superfluous or luxurious object), or to avoid a greater evil

than the abuse he interiorly condemns, it could not be considered tacit permission, nor could the subject avail himself of it to act with tranquility of conscience.

d) Presumptive or interpretative permission is permission that has not been requested from the superior and therefore has not been given; but which it is rightly presumed would be granted if it were requested from the superior not present at the time the act is performed. Presumed permission, when it meets the proper conditions, is a true permission and can, therefore, be used by the subject with peace of conscience. But it is often a dangerous permission, because there is easily the danger of deceiving oneself out of self-love or any other disordered affection, which makes simple ill-founded conjectures appear to be solid. In order to legitimately use the presumed permission, the following requirements are necessary: a) b) c)

Urgent need to act, to receive or acquire something. Impossibility or real difficulty to go to the superior. Moral certainty that the latter would grant permission if asked.

If these conditions were lacking, one would not be proceeding in good faith and the presumed permission would be null and void; if they are present simultaneously, one can act without fear of sin. Permission should not be presumed when it can be requested, under the pretext that it is unnecessary, for the superior will certainly grant it if it is requested. To act in this way is to act, in fact, in a spirit of independence; and to do so habitually or frequently will be detrimental to religious discipline and will favor transgressions of the vow or the virtue of poverty.

The one who used the license or presumed permission must later give an account to the superior of the act he performed under cover of it, especially if it is of some importance. A religious who has received or acquired something with presumed permission and assuming the three conditions required for its legitimacy, would sin against the vow or the virtue of poverty if he were to keep this object hidden from his superior. 3*a

Living poorly

158* The third and most important of the demands that the vow of poverty imposes on the religious or member of a state of perfection is that of living poorly. The first two, that is, not to possess absolutely nothing as one's own and, consequently, not to dispose of absolutely nothing without the legitimate permission of the superior, are relatively easy to fulfill. The difficulty lies in the third - to live poorly - which constitutes, however, the true purpose and the only raison d'être of the vow of poverty itself.

How poor and petty appears before this supreme purpose of the vow of poverty the eagerness to find out what constitutes grave matter or does not go beyond light in the practice of the Gospel! It is not a question of knowing how close the religious can come to sin without sinning, but how he should practice with the utmost delicacy and perfection the sacred commitment that he contracted before God on the day of his religious profession. a)

Voting and the virtue of poverty

159” First of all, it is necessary to distinguish carefully between the vow and the virtue of poverty, since the true purpose of the vow is none other than to lead us to the perfect practice of virtue, raising it to a higher level by making it the object of the virtue of religion and affirming its demands to the maximum of perfection and delicacy. Many theologians deny this, since the mere fact of involuntarily lacking temporal things or goods is neither good nor bad in itself - rather, it is an evil, humanly speaking - depending on the way in which this lack of material things is endured or endured. What evidently constitutes a virtue is the voluntary renunciation or detachment of these material goods for the sake of a higher ideal (e.g., one’s own perfection or the service of one’s neighbor). This is why Our Lord Jesus Christ proclaimed blessed, not the poor without more, but the poor in spirit, that is, those who voluntarily renounce riches for the sake of the kingdom of heaven (cf. Mt 5:3). In this sense, poverty of spirit-or if one wishes, the spirit of poverty-can be defined in the following terms: it is that virtue which inclines man’s will to detach himself from riches and material goods in order to imitate the poor Christ more closely and to attain more easily the perfection of charity> Starting from these principles, it is very easy to specify the difference between the vow and the virtue of poverty. “The vow - writes Valuy 22 - refers directly to acts of property; the virtue, principally, to the disordered affection for temporal goods* The object of the vow is effective disappropriation, exterior and material poverty; and of the virtue, affective disappropriation, poverty of spirit, interior detachment. The vow does not go beyond the strict obligation; virtue has on this essential obligation practices of perfection and advice. The vow is a means, a condition for arriving at virtue; virtue is the ulterior and final object that religion proposes to itself.

O.c. p.39-40.

Hence it follows that virtue, reaching the affections and desires, reaches further than the vow; that if the vow is broken, virtue is also broken, but the vow is not broken whenever virtue is broken; That every sin against the vow is a sin against the seventh commandment, but sins, even formal sins, against the tenth commandment reach only to virtue; and that the excellence of virtue over the vow is equal to the excellence that the end has over the means that lead to it".

As can be seen, the virtue of poverty of spirit is much finer and more excellent than the vow that leads to it and whose practice facilitates and elevates its status. In reality, the interior detachment from riches is imposed by the Gospel on all Christians: "You cannot serve God and mammon..., do not worry about tomorrow" (Mt 6:24.34); but the religious, through his vow, wants to carry poverty of spirit to its ultimate consequences: "If you want to be perfect, sell all that you have and give to the poor" (Mt 19:21). The poverty demanded by the vow," writes a contemporary author,23 "is undoubtedly of great merit; but in itself it does not suppose in the religious a very high perfection: rather than sanctifying him, it frees or emancipates him. The substance of poverty is acquired by the spirit of poverty. The vow, far from constituting the supreme, is the minimum of poverty; it is the custom, its basis. What a virtue for a religious to be content with keeping the vow and avoiding the faults that violate it! The virtue of poverty is, therefore, much more estimable than the vow; the latter is the means, the former the end. Moreover, it is more extensive than the vow; the vow forbids only exterior acts, while the virtue embraces exterior and interior acts (affections, desires, volitions). The

vow includes what obliges under pain of sin; virtue adds to what is of precept the observances of counsel and perfection. If virtue differs from the vow, it is, nevertheless, intimately united to it; for the more secure the vow will be the better virtue is practiced. One cannot violate the vow without sinning against virtue; on the other hand, to fail against virtue is not always to break the vow". b)

Faults against the virtue of poverty

In this matter it is impossible to give an exhaustive exposition, given the breadth and extent of the interior virtue of poverty; but we will expose some of the most important faults that can be committed against it, without breaking, however, the less fine demands of the simple vow of poverty 24. i.a

Sigh for what has been sacrificed.

160. Can it be conceivable that a religious, looking back, would desire what he no longer has and can no longer have, and accuse himself of having been excessively generous to Jesus Christ? 24 Gf. Valiív, o.c. p.40ff and Brief Treatise on the Religious State n.209.

And again occupy with thought and heart what the vow has torn out of his hands? On the day of his profession he said: "My God, accept my goods, I place them in your hands. Neither the farmer who deposits the seed in the earth to reap a hundredfold, nor the usurer who lends money to double his capital, nor the thirsty deer who plunges completely into a crystalline spring, nor the beggar who finds himself with an immense treasure, nor the exiled

prince who gloriously returns to recover the throne of his elders, can experience the pleasure I feel, i Happy I am to be able to atone for my sins with universal detachment! Happier still, to be able to buy heaven with a few grains of dust! Happier still, to be able to follow Jesus Christ, to wear his livery and to conform myself to his image! I am only sorry, my God, to have so little to offer you, and this little to offer you so late”.

And he weeps now at what he calls his folly and his disgrace; he is consumed with desire to take again the burnt-offering which he had placed upon the altar; and, if he repents, it is not of having placed himself so late under the banner of the poor Jesus Christ, but of having confidently given himself to Him, placing his gold and silver in His hands. 2. to cling inordinately to those things which are allowed to him for his use.

161. He does not leave them or give them except with great feeling: he hides them, he denies them, he rises up against the daredevil who dares to touch them. After having tasted the gift of God,” says Bossuet 25, “he falls into the snare of desires; he strives to take back with one hand what escapes him from the other; with small things he tries to compensate himself for the mistakes he has made by leaving other greater things; he is always afraid of experiencing needs, and he clings to everything as one who is about to drown; He is tireless in specious pretexts; he invents a thousand new needs; he is sensitive to the most insignificant privations; he does not want to possess anything, but he wants to have everything, even the superfluous, however little it may flatter his delicacy; he clings to a piece of furniture, a dress, a book, to a nothing that he does not dare to name. He seeks all these things with avidity, keeps them with solicitude, fears to lose them, and defends them with fierceness, and is more diligent and more zealous in this

than the people of the world for great interests and even than the avaricious for their treasures”.

Is there anything more ridiculous and more worthy of pity? To substitute one object for another, the goods of religion for those of the century, the little for the much, the trifles for a brilliant fortune. And was it worth having deployed so much energy and having made such supreme and heroic efforts to give up everything? Whether the object be great or small, is it not the same greed 2$ Bossuet, OMtgactortes of the religious state (quoted by Vaujy, p.42).

And what does it matter to the eagle, made to soar to the highest regions, if it is held captive by a cable or simply by a thread, if in the end it is captive? Will we never come to understand that poverty is not virtue, but the love of poverty? That the poor whom Jesus Christ called blessed are not the poor in goods, but the poor in spirit? That the exterior lack of self-respect is nothing more than a disposition for the interior lack of self-respect, which is the most excellent and the only essential? That God does not see if our hands are full, but if our hearts are empty, and that everything is taken from our hands only to take everything from our hearts? If it were not so, said a solitary man, our lot would be worse than that of the worldly, because what they pursue offers at least the appearance of greatness, and, on the other hand, they are totally ignorant of the delights and the reward of virtue. And we, knowing vanity perfectly well, after having tasted the sweetnesses of the Lord, concentrate our thoughts and affections on a base and miserable object! Destitute as the poor, we would have the greed of the rich! After having left the world with great

resonance and through the main door, we would re-enter it furtively and as if through an escape hatch! Would it not be to imitate the child who, while indifferently watching the fire consume his inheritance, cries and shouts because his toys are taken away from him? Character of religious poverty should be the spirit of detachment and dispossession; the low value of an object does not excuse the excessive attachment that one has to it. The inclination to temporal goods is in us a deep-rooted passion, which the vow condemns, but does not destroy. It is very fruitful in subtleties and pretexts; it often attaches itself to trifles when it lacks objects of greater value. This matters very little to the tempter; he is content with the disordered affection that results from these attachments and the harm that the virtue of poverty suffers from them. 3. to have for one’s own use, even with permission, objects of luxury or superfluity or of worldly appearance, and to incur useless expenses.

162. A religious vainly considers himself authorized by a permission requested by pure formula and granted out of mere complacency and perhaps reluctantly by the superior. From the moment that he has obliged himself to live poor, according to the rules and spirit of the institute, all that he can lawfully obtain is only what is necessary, useful, and convenient; and this from

The degree of poverty professed by the order, the charges and the particular needs that weigh on him. Whether or not he has permission, let him voluntarily divest himself of everything else, if he does not want to violate the virtue of poverty. More on a whim than out of necessity, a religious

asked for a curious object to make use of it. What,” said the superior, “aren’t you ashamed to join Jesus Christ in your heart with such a frivolous object? Isn’t God great enough to fill your heart? Does he who is in possession of God need anything? And isn’t he who does not have enough of the sovereign Good miserly? Could you have come this far without understanding those maxims which have always been familiar to the saints and especially to the religious saints: Everything and nothing. The less you have$> the more you will have. To have everything it is necessary to have nothing ? A hundred times you have heard it said and a hundred times you yourself have said what was the poverty of Jesus Christ, what was his food, what was his clothing, what was his habitation, what was the humble and rude office he had. Will you never know how to imitate him whom you have so solemnly taken for your model and your master?”

What can one say to those who, from one permission to another, obtaining one object or another, always taking and never returning, affect lordship in the midst of their brothers, and end up being better provided for than the most opulent laymen? From time to time it is very useful to make a general search of the cell, the closet, the library, etc., and to take to the superior or put in its place what at that moment is not necessary, what is known to be useful or pleasing to others, the merely ornamental objects, etc., mainly that for which one begins to feel attachment. Our Lord Jesus Christ asked St. Gemma Galgani for a tooth of St. Gabriel of Sorrows, which the saint kept with great veneration, but with her heart somewhat attached to it. Not even to a pious object does the Lord want the heart of a religious to be attached: He wants it entirely and only for Himself. 4. to Seek with restlessness or too much anxiety one’s own comforts, complaining or murmuring when she

does not have everything to her liking or when something is refused or taken away from her.

163* In such cases, the religious declares that the motive which induced him to enter religion was certainly not the desire to be surrounded by privations, but to live according to his desires; not to crucify his flesh, but to flatter it. He manifests that he has not seriously promised God poverty, nor has he placed himself at the service of the poor Jesus Christ, but to mock Him and to insult Him with his conduct.

It is a fact that the centuries have gone by, the customs of our time have changed and the average standard of living has experienced a remarkable rise even in the most modest spheres of society. In many religious houses, in keeping with modern times, one finds today facilities of life, material well-being and comforts unknown in other times. But, precisely for this reason, the religious must be content with what his order or institute provides him, without aspiring to increase in his own particular usefulness the already excessive comforts with which he is surrounded. Times change, but the Gospel does not: Jesus Christ is still crucified and the commitments contracted before God have the same binding force they always had. When Shunamitis saw the modesty, the piety, the temperance, the simple and serious exterior of the prophet Elisha, she said to her husband: “I know that this man, who always passes by our house, is a holy man of God. Let us prepare him a little room on high, and set him a bed, and a table, and a chair, and a candlestick, that he may retire to it when he comes to our house” (4 Kings 4:10). Such is the cell and such are the furnishings of the religious; the rest should only be related to the real needs.

Three things must always shine in the cell of a good religious: poverty, cleanliness and order. Poverty demands cleanliness, and one and the other favor order. Is this not what the angels admired in the little house of Nazareth? 5. a To be discontent with food, clothing and other necessary things, and demanding with regard to personal care, in case of indisposition or sickness.

164. Instead of showing surprise or complaining as if an injustice were done to him when the food is poorly seasoned or not as abundant or exquisite as he would wish, or when the clothing is worn and deteriorated, or when the cell is dark and narrow, he should say: “I have long desired and sought it, I have at last espoused holy poverty. Am I to refuse it now that I have found it forever?” “Two things are incompatible, said St. Teresa: to be poor and to be well given.” And St. Margaret of Alacoque wrote: “The state of the poor consists in lacking the comforts of life; and the voluntary poor, who have chosen poverty for the love of Jesus Christ, must be ready to love and experience the inconveniences and difficulties of that condition. It is not being poor to have made a vow of poverty and at the same time not to experience any privation”.

A poverty without needs, a poverty in which nothing is lacking, a poor person without poverty is certainly a very poor person.

and a ridiculous caricature of true evangelical poverty. The sick religious too demanding or prone to claim exceptional cares will do well to ask themselves if, if they had been in the world, they would have had as many as in the religious life. They are unaware that they are richer than the greater part of the men of the world, some of whom have nothing at

all, others bear with patience the most serious hardships, and others carefully economize what they have, condemning themselves to thousands of privations. Is it right for the religious to want to eat better, dress better, and have better housing than the greater part of the men of the world and even than he himself would have had in his own house? To exempt himself from the common life without real necessity or sufficient reason. 165. Common life is the principal duty which the virtue of poverty imposes on the religious. It consists in being content in everything with what is provided for the other members of the community, without privilege for anyone, without "quota soldiers," and without dispensation that is not truly necessary. The religious should not take advantage of his old age, of his infirmities, of the offices he has held or of the goods he has given to the community to demand unnecessary dispensations, but he should submit himself all the more to the ordinary regime the more advanced his age and the higher his rank, lest with his unjustified dispensations he become a source of scandal for the young religious. In sickness he should expose his need with simplicity and submit to the superior's judgment, not imperiously demanding the most costly remedies nor the most skillful doctors, and patiently enduring the deprivation of certain painkillers, which, according to St. Bonaventure, is the highest degree of poverty and the highest degree of poverty, is the highest degree of poverty and the touchstone of virtue, because too often one sees religious who are rigid observers of poverty when they are in good health and who at the slightest illness scandalize their brethren with their excessive delicacy, with their demands and with their complaints and murmurings. complaints and murmurings. Such are the principal ways of failing in the virtue of poverty without directly breaking the vow of poverty. Let us see now, in a more positive and spiritual plan, what are the principal degrees of perfection in the practice of evangelical poverty. '

Degrees of perfection in the practice of poverty

166” Religious poverty can be practiced with greater or lesser perfection. a) The first is to abstain carefully from possessing anything as if it were one’s own or to do any act of property without permission. This constitutes the obligatory matter of the vow, the nonobservance of which, however small, always constitutes a sin, grave or light, depending on the case. b) The second is to deprive oneself of the superfine and of whatever has the appearance of luxury or wealth, being content with what is necessary, as the rule and constitutions themselves understand it, without the heart clinging to it. The third, to prefer for his use and to choose, when possible, that which is of less value, the most uncomfortable and least agreeable, accepting with pleasure and even asking for the lowest jobs, those that can put him in the most intimate relationship with the poor, or oblige him, like the poor, to earn his daily bread with his work. In this degree begins the perfection of poverty. d) Fourth, to accept with joy, for love of God, the privations that poverty may impose on us, even in necessary things, rejoicing in this kind of deprivation and feeling ready, if necessary, to beg from door to door, in imitation of St. Paul, who gloried in serving Jesus Christ “in hunger and thirst, in privations of every kind, in cold and nakedness” (2 Cor 11:27), and like St. Francis of Assisi, of whom history tells us that “never was there a man so eager to possess gold as he was to possess it, nor so zealous and vigilant in the defense of his treasures as he was in the preservation of the pearl of poverty” (2 Cor 11:27). This degree constitutes the perfection of evangelical poverty. e) With the increasingly intense practice of this fourth degree of poverty, the religious will reach the

conquest of total detachment not only from material things and goods - the proper object of the virtue of poverty - but also from everything that is not God himself, which supposes the full perfection of charity and, therefore, complete and consummated holiness. Nothing will be given to him of the esteem and good opinion of men, of his health and bodily strength, of the offices or jobs that can give him or take away from him, of the events of his own life, or of his own life, or of his own life, or of the life of others.

Cf. Valuy, o.c. p.48‘50; Tratado breve del estado religioso n.210.

The fact is that there is only one Being that we can desire and possess absolutely and immutably, one Being to whom we must bind ourselves. Explaining the excellencies of this total detachment, Colín 27 rightly writes: “In reality there is only one Being that we can desire, seek and possess absolutely and immutably; a Being to whom we must bind ourselves forever with unbreakable bonds: God… and his will. God, the first principle and ultimate end of our life; his will, the only and obligatory path that leads us to him. God is the only necessary Being. In our existence, creatures are nothing more than accidents and contingencies, and we are not allowed to will them or use them except conditionally, that is, insofar as they lead us to God and in full conformity with his will. From the moment that by means of them an obstacle to the glory of God and to our sanctification arises, there is an obligation to renounce them without sadness and to abandon them without complaint. Detachment consists, therefore, in loving nothing, in seeking nothing, in possessing nothing, not even with desire, and in using and

enjoying nothing except in God and for God, within the framework of his divine will. As the sun, whose rays illuminate, warm, and fertilize without being stained or chained to anything, so also the detached soul, fixed on high, can spread itself throughout the whole of creation, avoiding sinking and contamination. Holy indifference detaches and frees the soul from all that is not God and makes it resemble that bird of paradise of which St. Francis de Sales speaks, which, "disdaining the earth, never touches it, living always in the air, so that even when it wants to rest it only attaches itself to the trees by a little thread, from which it remains suspended in the air, outside of which and without which it can neither fly nor rest. In the same way, those great souls, properly speaking, do not love creatures in themselves, but their Creator and their Creator in them, and if by the law of charity they are bound to any creature, it is only to rest in God, the only and final aspiration of their love. "28 "Live," writes St. John of the Cross, "as if there were nothing in this world but God and herself, so that her heart cannot be stopped by anything human. The ideal would be to love with all one's heart all that God wants us to love, but without making ourselves slaves of our affections and, therefore, of creatures; but precisely in this lies the small miracle of loving without being chained, possessing without being imprisoned, using without selfish enjoyment; preserving one's complete independence and, finally, not seeking in everything and for everything more than the glory of God". d)

Love of poverty

167 In order to practice evangelical poverty in all its perfection, it is necessary first of all to love it passionately, to fall in love with it with all the effective force of which we are capable.

27 28 29

Cf. Colin, The cult of the vows p.292-294. St. Francis de Sales, Tratado dél amor de Dios l.io c.5. St. John of the Cross, Avisos y sentencias espirifuafes n.68,4.

Without this love," writes Colín 30, "it is impossible to practice perfect poverty. Detachment is always accompanied by sacrifice, and if one does not love, how can one sacrifice generously? God accepts only the gifts that are offered to him with joy and smiling (cf. 2 Cor 9:7), and what is a smile more than the flowering of love on the lips? Sad poverty is that of which the heart is absent? Love of poverty means love of all that is small, humble, modest, modest, old, used, of all that recalls and smells of detachment. Predilection, then, for the poor, those privileged of the Heart of Jesus, because if no one is allowed to despise and hate the rich, nevertheless, these attentions and delicateness of heart with the poor are very praiseworthy. If Providence has guided us to enter an institute consecrated especially to the evangelization, instruction or corporal service of the abandoned, the miserable, the savages, let us feel happy and proud of our chosen vocation and let us remain faithful to it. Love of poverty: love, then, of the privations, renunciations and restrictions connected with the practice of this virtue. "I would also add this," wrote St. Ignatius to the Fathers of Padua, "those who love poverty must love the consequences of poverty, as many and such as they are, such as eating badly, dressing badly, sleeping badly, and being despised. He who loves poverty and does not want to feel the discomfort of it, is a poor person who is too delicate and gives undoubted proof of loving the name more than

the reality of poverty, of loving it more with his lips than with his heart". Love of poverty means love of its vow and of its many mandates and prohibitions; love of all the practices and details of poverty imposed by the rule or recommended by tradition. Love of poverty and, as a consequence, supernatural hatred of the comfortable, of abundance, of the superfluous; hatred of the brilliant, of the precious, of worldly luxury; hatred of everything that can discourage and corrupt the spirit of poverty in souls or in communities". e)

Christ, supreme model

16B. Christ is the incomparable model of all the virtues, but perhaps in no other is his example so impressive as in the heroism of his poverty and total detachment from material things. Let us contemplate Jesus," writes Dom Columba Marmion 31, "our model in everything; and since we want to follow him out of love, let us see what he has taught us. Throughout his life he espoused, so to speak, poverty. He was God: "He did not usurp equality with God" (Phil 2:6). Legions of angels are his servants; with a single word he brought heaven and earth out of nothing, adorning them with riches and beauties, which are a pale reflection of his infinite perfections: "Lord, how wonderful is your name in all the earth"! (Ps 3:2). He is so powerful and magnificent that, says the psalmist, "it is enough for him to open his hand to shower every living thing with blessings" (Ps 144:10). And behold, this God becomes incarnate to lead us to him, choosing the way of poverty. When the Word, king of heaven and earth, came into this world, he willed, 5" O.C. p.244'245. 31 Cf. Jesus Christ, ideal

of the monk c.10,4.

in his divine wisdom, to arrange the details of his birth, life and death in such a way as to emphasize above all his love of poverty and his contempt for earthly goods. Even the poorest are born at least in a house; but he was born in a stable, on straw, in praesepio, because “there was no room for his Mother in the inn” (Le 2:7). In Nazareth he lived the life of a poor artisan: “Is not this the son of the artisan? (Mt 13:55). Later, in his public life, he has nowhere to lay his head, “when even the foxes have dens to hide in” (Le 9:58). And at the hour of his death he wanted to be stripped of his clothes and die naked on the cross, for the tunic woven by his Mother was taken by the executioners. His friends have forsaken him; of his apostles he sees only St. John. His Mother still remains with him, but he gives her to his disciple: “Behold your Mother” (Acts 19:27). His detachment is absolute, but he goes even further: he renounces the heavenly joys with which the Father inundates his humanity, and, in total abandonment, he exclaims: “My God, why have you forsaken me? (Mt 27:46). And he remains so/o, suspended between heaven and earth. This is the example that covered the world with monasteries and filled the monasteries with souls in love with poverty. When we contemplate Jesus, poor in the manger, in Nazareth, on the cross, stretching out his hands and saying to us: For you I have done this, we understand the divine madness of those who love the cross. Let us, then, keep our eyes fixed on the divine poor man of Bethlehem, of Nazareth, of Golgotha, and, if we feel the discomfort of privations, let us accept them generously; let us not consider them as a worldwide calamity. Let us never forget that our poverty must not be conventional, but effective, since we truly promised Christ to leave everything to follow him. Only at this price will we find in him all riches, for he bore our miseries in order to enrich us with his perfections, as St. Paul teaches. The poverty of

his humanity serves as a means for him to draw near to us and to inundate our souls with the riches of his divinity: “You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that he might enrich us with his poverty” (2 Cor 8:9). This is the admirable exchange that has taken place between us and the divine Word: that of his infinite riches. But he communicates them only to the poor: Esurientes implevit bonis (Le 1:53); and the most detached are those who receive the most.

After explaining how the holy Humanity of Christ lacked human personality and, for this reason, was master of himself only in the person of the Word, to whom he was hypostatically united; and that, even as the Son of God, he was entirely dependent on the Father, to the point of not wanting to fulfill his will in anything, but only the will of his heavenly Father (cf. Mt 26:39), continues the distinguished Abbot of Maredsous, Dom Columba Marmion: “This aspect, one of the most profound and essential aspects of the life of Jesus Christ, should present our poverty with a model to imitate. Let us imitate Christ, not only as poor materially, but poor in spirit; let us imitate him by stripping ourselves of what is our own, of what comes from the deepest part of our being, of our own judgment, of our own love, of our own will, which are so many forms of the “vice of property”, so as to have only the thoughts, desires and will of God, and to act only by supernatural motives. Then all

in us will proceed, so to speak, from God; God will see realized the divine plan that he formed about us from all eternity. If in our thoughts or actions we mix in something that does not come from God, that comes from ourselves-sin

or imperfection-we disfigure in ourselves the divine image. God then sees in the creature something proper to it; and since it is something that does not come from God, it does not return, it cannot return to Him. A great obstacle to heavenly grace and to the divine pleasures is this “vice of property,” which includes not only the possession and disposition of material goods and the simple attachment to them, but also the inordinate affection for what constitutes the most intimate part of our own person”.

The example of Jesus Christ must lead us irresistibly to the love of absolute poverty and to the practice of absolute poverty out of love. Because Plato was a stammerer, his disciples stammered when repeating his lessons. Because Alexander the Great had a crooked neck, all his knights imitated this defect. Will the example of the poor Christ, who died for us naked on a cross, have less force and efficacy for his disciples than the natural defects of the wise and great of the earth have for theirs? “The Son of God,” writes St. Alphonsus Liguori32 , “wanted to be poor on earth and always poor. He was poor at his birth, having no palace but a stable, no cradle but a manger, and no bed but a little straw. He was poor, and poor in everything throughout his life. Poor in his habitation, reduced to a single chamber which served at the same time for work and rest; poor in his clothing, poor in his food. St. John Chrysostom says that Christ and his disciples ate nothing but barley bread, as is inferred from the Gospel. Finally, he was poor in his death, leaving nothing but his poor clothes, which the soldiers divided among themselves before he breathed his last, so that they had to give him alms for the shroud and the tomb.

St. Bernard was able to sum up in a felicitous phrase this extreme poverty of Jesus Christ: “Poor at his birth, poorer in his life and very poor on the cross. 33 And in another place the holy Abbot of Clairvaux writes: “In the treasures of

heaven there was one pearl missing, poverty, a pearl very common, but much despised in the world. What does the Son of God do? 34 “If poverty were not a great good,” Christ himself said to St. Angela of Foligno,35 “I would not have chosen it for myself, nor would I have left it as an inheritance to my chosen ones. 32 Cf. Ascetical Works t.io c.g p.26.3-264. 22 St. Bernard, Vi tis mélica c.2. 24 Cf. Smwm 1 at the Christmas Vigil n.5. 35 Cf. Life and Opuscles of Sonta Angelo de Fo ügno 1.2 p.2.8, c.2.

And because Jesus loves poverty,” writes Colin 36, “his predilections go to the poor. His mother is nothing more than a humble woman who mends, darns and takes care of the house; his father, a carpenter, and the pride of the Pharisees will not fail to remind him on occasion: “Is not this the carpenter’s son, the son of Mary? (Mt 13:55). He chooses his disciples from among the humble population of fishermen and, if any of the bourgeoisie of that time pretends to follow him, he imposes on them first to impoverish themselves (Mt 8:19-20; cf. 19:21). Rather than princes and kings, he calls the shepherds to his cradle. Jesus inclines in preference to the little ones, to those who work and suffer, and places them among the blessed. The Gospel is preached to the poor: a sign that the kingdom of God is near and that the Messiah has already come (Mt 11:5; Le 4:18-21).

Such are the sublime examples of Jesus Christ regarding poverty. Anyone who claims to be his disciple must try to imitate him-even if he lives in the midst of the world-at least in the spirit of this evangelical poverty, that is, by keeping his heart free and detached from the riches of the earth, even if he possesses them in abundance. But in a very

special way a religious is obliged to conform himself to the affective and effective poverty of Jesus Christ if he has committed himself to it with a vow that binds him gravely before God. However, it is not enough for the religious to simply fulfill the indispensable things in order not to break his vow, since the vow is not the virtue of poverty, but only a means to attain it: one can live and die materially poor without possessing the virtue of poverty. If the religious endures poverty, he fulfills his vow; but he does not belong to the number of those of whom Christ said: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:3). Christ did not canonize the vow, but the virtue of poverty. Only those who practice poverty with enthusiasm and joy are poor in the style of Christ. Joy implies love, and it is only love that counts before God.

Chapter 5

LA

CHASTITY

The second of the three constitutive vows of the religious state is that of the virtue of chastity. By it the religious offers to God the holocaust of his body and that of all the natural affections which he could legitimately foster in another kind of Christian life. 36 O.c. p. 168.

O. Chastity

277

As we did with regard to the vow of poverty, we will divide the study of the vow of chastity into two articles, dedicated, respectively, to the theory and practice of the vow. Article i LA

THEORY

In this first article we will examine the following points: the nature of chastity in general, its different forms, its excellence, religious chastity, the vow of chastity, what this vow implies, its juridical effects, the triple foundation of religious chastity, its true meaning and scope, perfect chastity and theological life, and finally, a refutation of the principal errors against perfect chastity. 169, 1. Chastity in general. According to its etymology, the word chastity comes from the verb to punish, alluding to the punishment that man must impose on concupiscence, submitting it to the dictates of right reason. In its real meaning, chastity is

the moderating virtue of the genital appetite. Note that the appetite for genitalia, that is, the natural inclination toward the propagating act of the human species, is not evil in itself, but good, since it has a most noble end and has been placed by God himself in nature and in the heart of man. What happens is that, precisely because of this highest natural purpose, willed and intended by God, its exercise is not licit outside of legitimate marriage and in order to propagate the human race. Any exercise of the genital appetite that deviates from this order established by God himself is a disorder and, therefore, a true sin. Now, since this natural instinct is so strong and vehement in every normal person, a virtue is needed to restrain and moderate it in accordance with the dictates of right reason, that is, within the order established by God. This is the role and function of the virtue of chastity. Let us listen to the Angelic Doctor b "The word chastity comes from the punishment that reason imposes on concupiscence, taming it like a rebellious child. And it is a virtue because it meets the conditions of such, that is, it is a force regulated by reason".

As St. Thomas himself points out, the subject in which the virtue of chastity resides is the soul, but its matter is Í 2-2,151,1.

the body. It is the mission of chastity to use the bodily members moderately according to the true judgment of reason and the right choice of the will, that is, within the natural order established by God.2 Chastity is a virtue insofar as it works according to the dictates of reason; and it is the fruit of the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal 5:23), insofar as the spiritual joy that chastity brings with it.3 Chastity is a

special virtue, which is derived from Ja cardinal virtue of temperance, of which it constitutes one of its species or subjective parts4 . It is responsible for regulating, according to the dictates of right reason, the principal matter of the genesic appetite (that is, the act that transmits one's own nature). To regulate the secondary acts more or less related to this principal matter (e.g., looks, touches, etc.), there is pudicitia or modesty, which, properly speaking, is not a special virtue distinct from chastity, but a circumstance of it5.

Its different forms. The virtue of chastity can be kept in four different forms, which constitute as many degrees of perfection; a) Virginal, which consists in the purpose of perpetually abstaining from venereal pleasure in a subject who never has it

b) Juvenile, which consists of total abstinence before marriage. c) Widowhood, which consists of total abstinence after marriage. d) Conjugal, which regulates, according to the dictates of reason and faith, the licit delectations within marriage. As is evident, the most perfect form of chastity is virginal, followed, respectively, by juvenile, widowhood and conjugal chastity. Religious chastity, that is, that which constitutes the proper matter of the vow of chastity that is taken in the religious state or in institutes of perfection, abstracts or dispenses from the different forms of chastity that we have just enumerated, except for conjugal chastity, with which it is absolutely incompatible. The religious vow refers to perfect and perpetual chastity, which in itself is perfectly compatible with virginal, youthful or widowed chastity. Let us listen to Pius XII on this matter6: 2 3 4 5 6

Cf. 2-2,151,1 ad 1, Cf. 2-2,151,1 ad 4. Cf. 2-2,143. Cf. 2-2,151,4Pius XII, encyclical Sacra virginiíos, March 25, 1954.

“One cannot count the multitude of souls who, from the beginnings of the Church to the present day, have offered their chastity to God, some preserving their virginity intact, others consecrating their widowhood to him forever after the death of their spouse, others, finally, choosing a totally chaste life after having mourned their sins. But all agreeing in the same purpose to abstain forever, for the love of God, from the delights of the flesh. Let the teachings of the Holy Fathers on the excellence and merit of virginity serve as a stimulus, support and encouragement to all these to persevere steadfastly in the sacrifice offered and never again to take even the smallest part of the holocaust offered before the altar of God. This perfect chastity is the subject of one of the three vows which constitute the religious state; it is required of the clerics of the Latin Church for major orders, and also of the members of secular institutes. But it flourishes likewise among many who belong to the lay state, since there are men and women who, without belonging to a public state of perfection, have made the resolution or private vow to abstain completely from marriage and the delights of the flesh in order to serve their neighbor more freely and to unite themselves more easily and intimately to God.”

We shall return to this point at length when we explain the nature and purpose of religious chastity. 171. 3. Excellence of chastity Chastity is a truly angelic virtue, inasmuch as it makes man like the angels and, in a certain sense, superior to them, since, being pure spirits, they do not experience the stimulus of the flesh or the rebellion of the passions. Nevertheless, it is not the most excellent virtue of all. Above it are principally the theological virtues, which have for their

direct and immediate object God Himself, and the virtue of religion, which refers to divine worship, more excellent, in itself, than the immolation of one's own flesh. Let us listen to the Angelic Doctor, speaking of virginity, which is the most perfect form of chastity:7 "A thing can be the most excellent in two ways: a) In a relative order of values. In this sense, virginity is the most excellent virtue within the genus of chastity, since it transcends widowhood and conjugal chastity. And as beauty is attributed to chastity by antonomasia, to virginity corresponds an exceptional beauty, as St. Ambrose testifies: "Who can find a greater beauty than the beauty of the virgin, loved by the King, approved by the Judge, dedicated to the Lord, consecrated to God?" b) In an absolute order of values. In this sense, virginity is not the most excellent of virtues. For, in the first place, the end must always come before the means, which are all the better inasmuch as they lead more effectively to the attainment of the end. Now then: the end which makes virginity praiseworthy is consecration to divine things (for without this consecration purely material virginity has nothing to do with virtue, being a circumstance of a merely physiological order); and this end, as can be seen, is inferior to that of the the theological virtues and to religion itself, 7 2-2.152.5. The explanatory parenthesis is ours, and reflects the doctrine of the second and third articles of this same question of k Summa Theologica,

whose acts consist precisely in those divine things for which virginity disposes. In the second place," martyrs who give their lives for him," and men or women who live in a monastery," renouncing their own will and all that they can possess for the sake of divine things," are more vehemently devoted to spiritual union with God than virgins who renounce for them only the pleasures of the flesh. Then"

absolutely speaking" virginity is not the most excellent of all the virtues".

In answering the objection taken from the Apocalypse" in praise of the virgins" of whom it says that "they accompany the Lamb everywhere and sing a new song that only they can sing" (Rev 14:3-4), the Angelic Doctor writes:8 "The virgins are said to "accompany the Lord everywhere" because they imitate him not only in the integrity of the mind" but even in the integrity of the flesh, as St. Augustine affirms, following the Lord for more reasons of resemblance. By which it is not intended to inculcate that they follow him more closely, since this corresponds to the virtues that unite the spirit more intimately to God (such as the theological virtues, religion, martyrdom, etc.). The "song" that only virgins sing is the joy they have for their bodily integrity".

172. 4. Religious chastity. As we have indicated above, the chastity proper to the religious life or to the states of perfection is perfect and perpetual chastity, independently of the virginal, youthful or widowly modality that it may have in a given subject. In posing the question of whether perfect and perpetual chastity is essential to the religious state, the Angelic Doctor 9 writes: "The religious state demands the detachment from everything that prevents man from giving himself totally to the service of God. Now then: the use of one's own body prevents the soul in two ways from giving itself totally to that divine service: a) One, by the vehemence of pleasure" whose frequency, as Aristotle observes, "far from diminishing concupiscence, increases it. From whence it follows that the use of these pleasures withdraws the soul from that perfect tendency toward God proper to the religious state. That is why St. Augustine says: "Nothing so weakens the human spirit as the flattery of women and the intimacies proper to marriage. b) Another way of impeding this total surrender of the soul

to God is by the concerns that come to man from the government of the family and from the temporal goods for his sustenance. For this reason, St. Paul says: “The celibate takes care of the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. The married man is to be careful about the things of the world, how to please his wife” (1 Cor 7:32). Therefore, perpetual continence, as well as voluntary poverty, is an essential part of the religious state. And so Vigilando was condemned for equating riches with poverty, and Jovinianus for equating marriage with virginity.” $ Ibid. ad 3. The explanatory parenthesis is ours,

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173* 5* The vow of chastity* It is essential to religious chastity that it be ratified by a vow, promise, or oath obligatory before God. St. Thomas gives two decisive reasons for this 10: 1° Religious are in a state of perfection. But for such a state to exist, a strict obligation to practice the things required for perfection is required. Now this strict obligation is contracted before God by means of a vow; and since the perfection of religious life requires poverty, chastity, and obedience, it must be concluded that the religious state requires that the obligation to these three elements be ratified by means of a vow. 2. Perfection of the religious life demands the consecration of one’s whole life to God. But man cannot at once give his whole life to God, because it does not exist in its entirety in one moment, but is successive. Therefore, only by binding himself with a vow can a man consecrate his whole life to God.

Precisely because religious chastity is ratified by a vow, sins committed against the angelic virtue have a double malice in a person consecrated to God: against chastity-as in any other person-and against religion by virtue of the religious vow. As to the gravity and species of the sin committed against religious chastity, all theologians recognize the following: 1. that there is no parity of matter here, and that, therefore, only the lack of full warning or full consent can make the sin venial. That it suffices to constitute mortal sin against the vow what suffices for mortal sin against the sixth or ninth commandments. 3. that the virtue and the vow fall on the same matter and have the same extension or breadth. This means that the vow, as well as virtue, is broken by internal acts as well as by external acts. 4.0 That the sin against the vow takes on the character of sacrilege, mortal or venial, depending on whether the sin is mortal or venial, depending on whether the virtue confers virtue. 5.0 That, properly speaking, the virtue of chastity does not admit of degrees: it exists or does not exist. However, if from its rigorous obligations in regard to its material object (which does not admit of parvity, as we have said), we go back to the soul or spirit with which it is practiced, it will be recognized 1° Cf. 2-2,186,6c et ad 2. 11 However, the non-existence of parvity of matter refers to sins that are directly opposed to chastity properly speaking, that is, to internal or external sins of impurity. But we must not forget that there is a chastity that we can call imperfect because it deals with that which, not being in itself venereal or sexual, leads to it or is a demonstration of it. It is what theologians call pudicitia, modesty, delicacy, or more generally, modesty, which regulates according to reason the conversations, readings, looks or touches more or less related to the venereal. In all the breadth of the vow and virtue of chastity also enter these secondary or imperfect acts of the sexual, but in them the moralists admit parsimony of matter. That is to say, not every obscene conversation, touching, reading or

looking is necessarily a mortal sin, even if it is a sin and therefore forbidden by virtue and the vow (cf. Peinador, Teología moral de los estados de perfección n.241).

The more perfect is the virtue of chastity-and, consequently* the practice of the vow-the more the soul is removed from everything that can defile it, and the more absolute is its rule over the body.

6. What the vow of chastity implies. The vow of perfect chastity taken in an order or institute of perfection entails a triple and painful renunciation that must be perfectly known by those who want to consecrate themselves entirely to God: a) to carnal pleasures; b) to human love; and c) to natural paternity. We are going to explain in some detail each of these three great renunciations 12. a)

Renunciation of carnal pleasures

174. This is the first of the renunciations or privations that the religious voluntarily imposes on himself when he takes the vow of perfect chastity. It is a most meritorious deprivation which supposes the will to totally subdue one of the most vehement natural tendencies of man, even though its satisfaction does not constitute a vital need of the organism, as, for example, food, drink, or sleep, which are true and imperious natural needs that man cannot avoid. In no way can the sexual instinct be compared to them, which obeys the demands of the species and not of the individual, and which the will, aided by grace, can entirely dominate. We can be quite sure that its exercise is not indispensable to the life of the individual and that, for the same reason, its dissatisfaction cannot harm the organism, with very rare

exceptions that confirm the general rule. Irrefutable proof of this is the multitude of men and women who in all times, since the origins of Christianity, have enjoyed a long, happy and often admirably fruitful life in the religious, priestly and even in the century, while maintaining the most absolute and perfect continence. But from the fact that the sexual instinct can be mastered it does not follow that it should be ignored, suppressed, destroyed, or annihilated, but consecrated or ordered to higher and superhuman ends. Ignorance in this regard is very frequent, especially among persons consecrated to God since childhood or adolescence, due in large part to an error of perspective on the part of their educators. There are legions who refuse to recognize-or to take it into account in their educational work-the preponderant role of sexuality as a substructure of the greater

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We refer here to the doctrine of R. Biot and P. Galimard in their work Guía médica de ‘las vocaciones sacerdotales y religiosas (Buenos Aires 1948) p.172-176, and that of the Tratado breve del estado religioso (Madrid 1961) p.201.

part of our instinctive activities, of our organo-psychic sensibility, both in man and woman. But ignorance or denial solve absolutely nothing, for they leave things exactly as they are and expose us to a multitude of dangers, because nature takes revenge on those who do not pay attention to its laws. Since, in fact, our personality is not independent of the sexual instinct, we will only become masters of ourselves when we have achieved rational mastery of that instinct,

and mastery, in this case, we repeat, does not consist in annihilation or annihilation, but in the orientation or consecration of that instinct towards nobler and higher ends. Let us not forget that we are dealing with a human order and not only with an animal order; and, therefore, we must not speak only of instincts, but of love, with all its physical and spiritual perspectives. If the person consecrated to God succeeds in falling in love with Him to the point of loving Him “with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength” (Mt 22:37), he will have achieved full and absolute mastery of his natural instincts almost without any effort and with a security and firmness that he would seek in vain by any other natural or supernatural procedure. The disorder of instinct can only be overcome^and channeled by love. b)

Renunciation of human love

175” If religious chastity consisted only in imposing on oneself the deprivation of carnal pleasure, it would not present the serious difficulties that it often does in practice. But it entails something quite different: the total renunciation of human love. The renunciation of marriage, as the supreme expression of human love, far surpasses merely physiological abstinence. The fact is that between the total gift of body and soul to a loved one and the development of our human powers there is such an intertwining and interdependence that the one who vows chastity renounces something that compromises the most intimate part of his being. God has arranged that in the perpetuation of the human species through the ages two creatures intervene, who love and unite with each other and collaborate with Him in the transmission of life. For this purpose He has placed in them a certain reciprocal attraction, physical and spiritual, which is called love. From this we can see how pure and decorous this feeling is in itself. Human love, then, is not foreign to the plans of the

Creator; on the contrary, it proceeds from God and, properly understood, leads to Him. If the religious renounces this human love and its charms, it is not out of contempt or disdain, but in order to devote himself to a directly spiritual love, which is love in its highest form, that is, the love of God without any partition with creatures on the merely natural plane. It is not enough, then, when one wishes to paint the picture of human love, to consider only the physiological aspects of the

question. The essential links between this and the fullness offered to our capacity for sacrifice and self-giving must be emphasized. It would be appropriate to illuminate these links more intensely when the religious and moral problems of marriage are presented. It is not a pagan apology of the flesh to say that it is intimately united to what is most spiritual in love: it is to put it in its place, which is extraordinary, but at the same time to assign to it its servant's office. All this, which is part of the Creator's plan and which a few traces of Jansenism or false modesty prevent us from extolling it as we should in order to give God the glory to which he has a right, must be crystal clear to the conscience of the man or woman who pronounces the vow of perfect chastity. It is not enough that the physiological realities of marriage have been revealed to them in special instructions; indeed, if they are shown only those realities, without illuminating them with the providential design that they execute in the prolongation of the affective powers and the development that they need in conjugal love, they are given a false idea of marriage, as if it were something vitally impure. The one who goes up to the altar or the one who closes behind him the doors of the

enclosure should not act with such dispositions of intelligence and heart. Their total surrender to God should not be the result of an aversion against what God, in his unfathomable wisdom, has created and made the common and ordinary means by which men come to the revelation of what love is, but because they prefer to give themselves voluntarily to a love of greater spiritual intimacy. There are natures that feel, almost instinctively, a repulsion for everything that concerns the flesh, and they flee from marriage because of this almost physical impression. This disposition can become the means by which the grace of God walks, we admit it without hesitation. But we must confess that this state is not normal. It is undoubtedly the result of the mistaken education of which we have spoken. Experience has often shown that these aversions to the flesh go hand in hand with certain psychoneurotic disturbances and that such vocations often give rise to rather unpleasant surprises. More peaceful are, on the contrary, the vocations of those who, responding to God's call, sacrifice the impulses that attracted them to marriage and that would have made them happy husbands and wives.

In short: he who pronounces the vow of chastity must do so perfectly aware that he renounces completely and forever to a human love that, in another state, would have nothing sinful and in which he could find a natural complement of physical and psychological order, willed and intended by God for the vast majority of men. c)

Renunciation of paternity

176. But the renunciation of human love inevitably brings with it another new sacrifice, the most painful and most endearing of all: the renunciation of natural paternity or paternity according to the flesh.

There exists in the human heart such a longing to renew itself in children, images of itself and of the loved one, that the renunciation of paternity is infinitely more painful than the resistance to the carnal impulse and to human love itself. And the young religious who renounces to be called mother, who sacrifices the pleasure of feeling the little arms of her child around her neck, heroically immolates what is deepest and most deeply rooted in the subsoil of her nature. Perhaps in the course of his life the religious will come to feel the heaviness of the sacrifice; and as he advances in years it is possible that the religious will measure the extent of the voluntary holocaust. All the more reason to insist in time, during the years of formation, on the nobility of Christian fatherhood or motherhood, so that they may become fully aware of what they are going to renounce for the sake of the exclusive love of God. We must resolve an objection that arises spontaneously from what we have just said. By weighing so much the values that the future religious renounces, do we not risk presenting them as diminished or diminished beings, as men and women inferior to fruitful spouses surrounded by children? No! Total chastity is not a diminishment, provided it is an authentic chastity and not a mere bodily chastity or a veil that hides hidden selfishness. The chaste man is only free from the vengeance of nature if he soars very high in spirituality, to find in those peaks, a hundredfold, the happiness and bliss that ordinary life offers to good spouses.

Insisting on the integral and positive character of this threefold renunciation that the vow of perfect chastity made by the religious brings with it, a contemporary theologian rightly writes l3: “We are now able to grasp the specificity of

a consecrated virginal psychology. The consecrated virgin possesses a “magnificent” soul, we have said. She renounces, in fact, voluntarily to all venereal delectation. Not only to all illicit delectation outside of marriage-spouses also renounce it-but to all delectation, pure and simple. This is what distinguishes the virgin from the wife. But if we were to prolong our reflections, we would see that this renunciation goes very far. Its dynamism goes far beyond the matter of the vow itself. It establishes the whole being-body, heart and soul-in human solitude. There is one thing that does not fall under the vow, but which undoubtedly constitutes the firmness of the voluntary commitment: the purity of the heart, the total freedom of the heart, which is deprived of all human love in order to give it better to God. Consecrated virginity is above all a matter of the soul, a matter of love. Renunciation forever. The young virgin in the world tries to remain so, except in the case of marriage. The consecrated virgin wants to persevere in the world, except in the case of marriage. The consecrated virgin wants to persevere in the world, except in the case of marriage.

tually virgin. And this perpetual and total self-giving is sealed and made irrevocable by the vow made in honor of God. This is precisely what distinguishes the consecrated virgin from all those who also keep a perpetual virginity, but for lesser reasons. Consecrated virginity is, in reality, as far removed from simple celibacy as it is from marriage. This category comes not from the fact that the consecrated virgin renounces human love forever by her vow of chastity, but from placing herself-by that very fact-under the dominion of divine realities. The psychology of a consecrated virgin must be defined very positively by this freedom to consecrate

herself totally to God, to give herself totally to God, to give herself completely to the divine, to contemplation (even if it is a non-contemplative order), to the love of God. This is the purpose of consecrated virginity. It has no meaning except on the basis of this total dedication and gift of self to God. Its greatness, its excellence, the praise it deserves, its superiority over the married state and over simple celibacy come from this total dedication to God, and in no way - it cannot be stressed enough - from its infertility. Normally, on the other hand, consecrated virginity, precisely by virtue of the widening of the heart working through divine love, overflows into a spiritual motherhood of extraordinary fruitfulness. Who can express the immense apostolic audacity-and God knows how necessary it is in our day-of virgin hearts?

We will return to this in the following article, when we speak of the practice of the vow of chastity. 177. 7. Juridical effects of the vow of chastity. The juridical effects of the vow of chastity vary substantially according to whether it is a simple or solemn vow. a) The simple vow constitutes an impediment to marriage, that is, it renders it illicit, though not invalid (can. 1058 §1). No simple vow renders a marriage null, unless this nullity has been established by a special mandate of the Apostolic See, as is the case with the simple perpetual vows professed in the Society of Jesus (en. 1058 §1; cf. en. 1073). If professed perpetually professed simple vows, whether in orders or in religious congregations, contract marriage without having obtained a dispensation from their vow of chastity, they incur excommunication latae. sententiae (that is, ipso jacto)t reserved to the ordinary (can. 2388 § 2).

b) The solemn vow (or the simple perpetual vow in the Society of Jesus) constitutes a diriment impediment to marriage, that is, it makes it illicit and invalid (en. 1073). If

they nevertheless attempt to contract marriage, even if only civilly, they incur latae sententiae excommunication simply reserved to the Apostolic See, which also affects the person who had the audacity to contract marriage with the solemnly professed (can. 2388 § 1).

O. Chastity

287

An unconsummated marriage between baptized persons, or between a baptized party and a non-baptized party, is dissolved by provision of law by virtue of the solemn religious profession of the baptized spouse (en. 1119).

Triple foundation of religious chastity* From all that has been said up to this point, it is evident that religious chastity rests on or has as its basis a triple foundation: natural, Christian and religious. Let us examine them briefly.

Natural foundation; the rights of God, Creator and Lawgiver.

a) God is our Creator. Everything that exists belongs to him by right of ownership. Even our own body and all its functions. Now then: God has disposed that the reproductive function of the body is ordered to the species and not to the individual. Therefore, the pleasure attached to the exercise of this function is only licit in order to propagate the species within a legitimate marriage. The violation of this order imposed by God himself on the whole human race constitutes a disorder and, therefore, a sin against the rights of God the Creator. This is the natural foundation of chastity, which binds all men of the world, Christian or not, since they are all God’s creatures and all must submit to the imprescriptible rights of their Creator.

b) God the Lawgiver has promulgated these divine rights in the sixth and ninth commandments of the Decalogue, a fundamental divine law which, because it expresses the most elementary postulates of law and natural law, also binds all men of the world, whether Christians or non-Christians. 2.0

Christian foundation; the sanctity of the baptized body.

In addition to the natural foundation that we have just recalled, the Christian is obliged to keep chastity by a second truly impressive title: the sanctity of the baptized body, as a temple of the Holy Spirit. St. Paul repeatedly expressed this duty with great apostolic energy and vehemence: “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, and that temple is you” (1 Cor 3:16-17). “The body is not for fornication, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body; and God, who raised the Lord, will raise us also by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? And shall I take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot?

God forbid! Do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot becomes one body with her? For they shall be two, he says, in one flesh. But he who cleaves to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him. Flee fornication. Whatsoever sin a man committeth, out of his own body remaineth; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body: or know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have received of God, and

therefore ye are not your own? You have been bought with a great price. Therefore glorify God in your body" (I Cor 6:13-20). 3.0

Religious foundation: the vow of chastity,

In addition to the two previous foundations-the natural and the Christian-the religious is obliged to the practice of perfect chastity by another third title or foundation of a sacred character: the vow of chastity by which he has consecrated himself to God. By virtue of this vow, the body of the religious is destined for the worship of God, in the manner of a consecrated chalice that cannot be used for profane purposes. Therefore, any sin against the vow of chastity constitutes in the religious a personal sacrilege, that is, a true profanation of a sacred person. 179 9. Its true meaning and scope. Having established the threefold foundation on which religious chastity is based and supported, let us now consider its true meaning and scope. Religious chastity is often spoken of as if it were a true end in itself. Its greatness and excellence are proclaimed and norms are given to flee from the dangers that beset it, the means to foster it positively are set forth, etc., and all this without leaving the sphere and sphere of chastity itself, that is, without relating it to the perfection of charity, which is the true end to which the vow of chastity and all the other vows and observances of the religious life are ordered. It is necessary to correct this inaccurate and partial vision of religious chastity, which so much diminishes and minimizes it. It must be conceived and practiced not only as a moral virtue in itself, but first and foremost as a function of the charity to which it is essentially ordered. Let us not forget that, as St. Thomas teaches, the moral virtues refer to the means of perfection and that only charity has a reason for its end 14, In order to specify the true meaning and scope of religious chastity, it is therefore necessary to point out the

role it plays in order to the perfection of charity, which is the true end of the whole Christian life and the only reason for the existence of the vows 14 Gf. 1-2,62,1-4; 63,3 ad 2; 2-2,184,1, *etc.*

C,5. Chastity

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and religious life. For the sake of clarity and precision, it is also appropriate to point out the superiority of religious chastity over marriage, precisely for the sake of the perfection of charity. 180.

a)

Religious chastity as an exercise of perfect charity.

“Perfect chastity,” writes a contemporary author 15, “besides being an element of perfect penance, by which the Christian seeks to free himself entirely from the dominion of evil, is also a quality proper to charity when it is possessed and exercised to the full extent and perfection required by its own nature. Moreover, if perfect continence from all sexual activity and love is imposed as an element of perfect Christian penance, it is because in order to possess charity in its entirety it is necessary to dispense with all that is foreign to its nature, and charity, as a supernatural and heavenly love, is intrinsically spiritual and virginal. Charity is the divine love that has taken hold of the souls of the children of God, and it has the same qualities in them as in God; no one can fully possess it without allowing it to impose its own ways and its own characteristics on the whole of life. Where the whole of life is governed exclusively by charity, love and relationships with others must necessarily be according to the divine modes of being that charity possesses: spiritual, supernatural, universal,

perfectly disinterested, *etc.* Over and above the appeals of instinct and sense, whoever wishes to live the life of the kingdom integrally and perfectly must feel that he is a brother to all, equally bound to all, without the natural elements intervening in the origin or in the structuring of this love and these relationships. In the perfect Christian life everything is dominated, moved and governed by charity and from charity, “where there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free man, male nor female” (Gal 3:28). This consideration explains why in the most ancient monastic writers continence is conceived as unified with detachment from one’s natural family. To be perfect and to live entirely in the sphere of charity, one must renounce every natural bond that could limit the universal and supernatural aspirations of charity. To possess charity perfectly means to love universally all the children of God, with the supernatural and perfect love with which God loves them, without recognizing any limitation in extension or intensity, by any other love or by any other preference. Thus perfect chastity appears to us as a new internal quality of Christian charity. It is not difficult to show how chastity is always given as a quality of supernatural charity, with more or less perfection according to the perfection with which charity itself is possessed. In its slightest degree, charity imposes at least respect for the demands of the spiritual and supernatural dignity of the person: in this way it informs and sanctifies the sexual life of Christians. When it affirms itself as the sole force and motive of life, to which it also tends by its very nature, it imposes a way of loving and relating to one another that is entirely adapted to the spiritual nature and supernatural situation of the children of God. We do not say that marriage is contrary to charity or incompatible with it; this was condemned in the Church many centuries ago. But neither can it be ÍS F. Sebastián Aguilar, G. M. F., La vida de perfección en la Iglesia (Madrid 1963) p.281-283. This work constitutes a

magnificent study on religious life, one of the best that has been written in these times. Vid* relrgrot*

to equate it intrinsically, as not a few authors would like to do, with virginity. Marriage proceeds from natural motives and structures, and as long as these natural motives and structures have real validity in the soul, they indicate that charity has not attained the fullness and perfection to which it tends by its very nature. As a perfect love of God, the charity that reaches its perfection concentrates all the energies of the soul in an adoration and a complete self-giving, which excludes any other love of a different nature and any other self-giving. It is not that the love of God precludes loving men, but the perfect love of God excludes loving others with a love that is not intrinsically supernatural, founded and governed by exclusively supernatural motives. In the same way, a perfect love of neighbor must abstain from all natural commitments that diminish one's availability in favor of all the brethren, and must positively love everyone with a perfectly disinterested love, with a love with divine foundations and characteristics, a love that is intrinsically virginal. For all these reasons, I do not think it is accurate to say that love of neighbor alone is capable of giving celibacy its objective value as a vocation. In the interior of his soul, the religious is accompanied by God and the angels, by all the saints; above his natural solitude he feels closer and more interior to all men than if he were bound to them by other natural ties less intense and profound than the charity of God. The love and possession of God restores to man the wholeness and sovereignty he lost through sin. The doctrine of the Cappadocian Fathers is not Platonism, but pure and profound theology: in virginity man

recovers his freedom and unity. 181. b) Perfect continence and marriage in relation to the perfection of charity.

First of all, it is necessary to remember that it is a doctrine contained in Sacred Scripture and expressly defined by the Church that virginity or perfect chastity, kept for love of God, is better and more excellent than marriage, even if the latter is considered a sacrament instituted by Christ. Here are the proofs: a) Sacred Scripture. Jesus Christ advised his disciples virginity-though without imposing it-as something more perfect than marriage: “There are eunuchs who are so by birth, others who were made by men, and others, finally, who have made themselves such for love of the kingdom of heaven. He who can understand, let him understand” (Mt 19:12).

The Apostle Paul, faithful interpreter of the doctrine of Christ, says it clearly: “I would want you to be free from care. The celibate is careful about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. The married man has to take care of the things of the world, how to please his wife, and so he is divided. The unmarried woman

Roger Schütz, prior of the Protestant community of Taizé, in the introduction to Max Thurian’s book Mariage et célibal (DeJachaux et Niesllé, 1955) p.12.

and the maiden is to be concerned only with the things of the Lord, to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman must be concerned with the things of the world, with pleasing her husband. This I say to you for your convenience, not to bind you together, but with a view to what is best and enables you to unite yourselves more

closely to the Lord, free from hindrances. If anyone thinks it unseemly for his maiden daughter to let the flower of her age pass and that he should marry her, let him do what he will: he does not sin, let him marry her. But he who is firm in his heart, not needy, but free and willing, determines to keep his daughter a virgin, does better. Whoever, therefore, marries his maiden daughter does well, but whoever does not marry her does better" (I Cor 7:32-38).

It is impossible to speak with more clarity and precision. b) The magisterium of the Church. The Council of Trent expressly defined the superiority of virginity or celibacy over marriage in the following canon: "If anyone says that the conjugal state must come before the state of virginity or celibacy, and that it is not better and more perfect to remain in virginity or celibacy than to be united in marriage, let him be anathema" (D 980).

In our days, the immortal pontiff Pius XII published his wonderful encyclical Sacra virginitas, dated March 25, 1954, in defense of this Catholic doctrine. In it one can read the following paragraph: "It is necessary to affirmas the Church clearly teaches-that holy virginity is more excellent than marriage. Already our divine. The Apostle Paul, speaking of the father who gives his daughter in marriage, says: "She does well," but then adds: "But he who does not give her in marriage does better" (1 Cor 7:38). And this same apostle, comparing marriage with virginity, expresses his thought more than once and especially with these words: "I would be glad if you were all such as I myself am…" (1 Cor 7:38). And I say to the unmarried and widows: It is good for you if you so abide, as I also abide" (1 Cor 7:7-8). For if, as we have said, virginity is advantageous to marriage, this is mainly because it aims at the attainment of a more excellent end, and also because in a most efficacious way it helps to consecrate oneself entirely to divine service, while he who is

impeded by the bonds and cares of marriage, to a greater or lesser degree, is “divided” (cf. 1 Cor 7:33).

c) Theological reason. St. Thomas expounds with his usual lucidity the superiority of virtuous virginity over marriage in the following way I7: “It was the error of Jovinianus to defend the good of marriage over the good of virginity. This doctrine is refuted by the example of Christ, who chose a virgin as mother, keeping Himself virginity, and by the doctrine of the Apostle, who expressly declares it. But even reason comes to discover this truth. Indeed, the divine good is superior to the human good; the good of the soul is superior to that of the body; 17 2-2,152,4.

that of the contemplative life, superior to that of the active life. Now then: virginity is ordered to the good of the soul, which is the contemplative life-“to think about the things of God”-while marriage is ordered to the good of the body, for the bodily multiplication of the human race, and must be dedicated to the active life, for the married man and woman must “think about the things of the world,” as St. Paul teaches. Therefore it is indisputable that virginity is to be preferred to conjugal continence”.

From this clear doctrine it does not follow, however, that all married people are inexorably condemned to be more imperfect than virgins or celibates consecrated to the Lord. One thing is the state in which they find themselves and quite another the personal situation of each one before God. Let us listen to the Angelic Doctor himself clarifying this very important and consoling point for married people l8: “Although, absolutely speaking, virginity is better than

marriage, a married person can be better than a virgin for two reasons. In the first place, in order to chastity itself, since it may be the case that a married man has a better disposition of mind to preserve virginity-if necessary-than the other who is currently a virgin. Secondly, because one who is not a virgin may possess other more excellent virtues. It can happen, adds St. Augustine, that a virgin, despite being occupied in the things of the Lord and preceding the married woman in excellence, does not possess, nevertheless, so perfectly the disposition for martyrdom, which is better than virginity”.

Nevertheless, as an absolutely indisputable general doctrine, the superiority of virginity or perfect chastity over marriage, considered as states of life, must be maintained. And the deepest root of this superiority is pointed out by St. Paul when he says that it is inevitable for married people to be occupied with the “things of this world,” while the virgin or celibate can devote himself exclusively to the “things of the Lord,” that is, “to be holy in body and spirit” (cf. I Cor 7:33-34). Let us listen once again to the author we quoted above, who admirably expounds this basic and fundamental point in order to understand the true meaning and scope of perfect chastity proper to the religious‘19: “It has already been said that, in the first centuries of the Church, the poverty required for Christian perfection was understood as a universal detachment from all created things, which placed man in his true situation of complete destitution before God and stripped him of all the false securities in which he instinctively sought to secure his threatened life. This universal detachment included the renunciation of all natural relations between men, and in the first place the renunciation of all natural relations between men, and in the first place the renunciation of all natural relations between men, and in the first place the renunciation of all natural

relations between men, and in the first place the renunciation of all natural relations between men.

Aguilar,

o.c.,

p.226-220.

marriage. Virginity is thus a form of poverty, detachment and penance. The complete abnegation of self and the effective acceptance of death to this world in all its extension and reality necessarily implies the negation and the overcoming of all the institutions and structures that come originally originated and imposed by nature. Chief among these is marriage. In all its anthropological significance and extension, as the fruit and origin of personal relationships founded on nature, marriage belongs essentially to this world; it is therefore necessarily transcended by the decision to renounce all things other than charity, in order to live integrally as citizens of the future world to which all Christians belong in their spirit. It is praiseworthy, and even necessary, to consider marriage from a Christian and supernatural point of view. It has been assumed by Christ to the dignity of a sacrament, making it the sign and instrument of a supernatural grace and love. But it would be to falsify its very nature and even the very spirituality of marriage to consider it as original and formally supernatural, born directly from the very supernatural being of the kingdom of God, originating in charity and possessing a definitive and eternal value. Theological reflection and the express teaching of Christ lead rather to consider it as an originally natural institution, essentially pertaining to the

corporeal and temporal condition of man, and, therefore, expiring and perishable like all things of this world. Its quality as a natural instrument for the perfection of man in self-giving, love and responsibility disposes it to be assumed as a sign and instrument of the true perfection of man in the kingdom of God through charity; but this does not suppress its essentially natural reality, but rather uses it in favor of the definitive perfection of man in the divine and eternal life of the kingdom of God. Although sexual life develops, according to the demands of the Christian life, informed and transformed by charity, itself erected as a sign and instrument of supernatural charity between the spouses, it is always an element of the life of this world, retained after baptismal death insofar as it is compatible with charity; assumed even as a cause of grace; but incompatible in itself, insofar as it is voluntarily and effectively willed and willed, with the perfection and integrity of charity. He who spontaneously accepts marriage and commits himself to it, accepts, together with charity, the motives and structures of this world, and thus excludes himself from the integrity and totality of charity. By this affection he remains in a certain way bound to this world, divided in his heart and subject to the tribulations of the flesh and the attacks of the devil. As we said with regard to the possession of temporal goods, here too the spirit of virginity and entire consecration to God in total and perfect charity is compatible with the fact of marriage, insofar as it is imposed for strictly supernatural reasons. At the same time, however, it must be affirmed, even at the risk of displeasing certain exalted panegyrists, that the acceptance of marriage on a completely voluntary basis is incompatible with the perfection of charity as Christ practiced it and proposed it to the ideal of all Christians. In this sense it is necessary to understand what Pius XII says in Sacra virginitas about the possibility of perfection without virginity. There can undoubtedly be the case of someone called to the perfect life outside the state of perfection and

even bound in marriage, either because the call to perfection in fact comes to the soul when there are already

The marriage bonds or because special personal or social conditions necessarily impose it as indispensable in order to safeguard the elementary demands of charity; but, as long as there is in these cases a true Christian perfection, it will reveal an aspiration and a real approach, as far as possible, to the normal and spontaneous way of realizing perfect charity in the totally supernatural and disinterested love of virginity* The renunciation of marriage appears not as a renunciation of love or of fruitfulness, but as a liberation from the limits of that love founded and structured by nature, in order to be able to live entirely given to the perfect and universal love of divine charity. Virginity directly seeks the fullness of a love that is initiated in marriage through natural structures that limit it, while at the same time sustaining it, and thus reduce the totality and universality that are proper to it. In the kingdom of God there is neither male nor female (Gal 3:28), because in it everything is structured on the basis of charity, at whose level the tension and sexual dialectic proper to this world no longer governs. In the perfectly realized kingdom of heaven, another deeper, more perfect and more universal love, strictly supernatural and personal, is affirmed as a unique and universal force, both personally and socially "The children of this world take wives and husbands; But those who are found worthy to have part in that world and in the resurrection from the dead neither take wives nor husbands; for they can neither die nor die (for this reason there is no room for generation), since they are equal to the angels, and are sons of God because they are sons of the resurrection"

(Le 20:34-36). Charity is a reality of divine order, essentially spiritual and disinterested, full and sufficient in itself; a love that affirms itself superior to every natural and sexual structure when it is perfectly possessed and realized. For this reason, those who aspire to possess it perfectly must renounce all other love and all other relationships of a natural kind founded on nature and subject to time and earth. The renunciation of marriage, as a perfect penance, includes renunciation of every sexual disorder and even of every disorder of a love founded on flesh and blood; renunciation, moreover, of sexual activity itself as a source of possible disorders and difficulties against charity, of compromises with sin; and, finally, even more radically, renunciation of a temporal structure that is considered outdated, by recognizing and accepting one's own death as something fully done in the death of Christ. Complete atonement for sin in perfect penance and liberation from all things that threaten charity or at least limit its perfect possession and full expansion. Complete abstinence from all sexual activity and intercourse lays bare the profound disorder introduced into nature by original sin. The Christian strives to impose totally the norm of charity and the regency of his spirit against all resistance and all violence of the flesh. Only by arriving at complete renunciation is the perfect obedience of nature to the spirit and to charity attained, and all the disorder produced by sin is extirpated, leaving no loophole open through which concupiscence can continue to be nourished. It is curious to find in the Fathers and in St. Thomas himself an idea different from that which is often spread in our manuals of morals and spirituality. It is commonly said that marriage is a remedy against concupiscence, but it is not said that it is a remedy precisely by suppressing it and substituting it with charity, inasmuch as sacrifice and fidelity require to be secured in a love that is firmer, more lasting and more disinterested than the purely

sexual. In this line, the remedy and the direct victory against concupiscence is its complete negation by virginity, first accepted as a means of perfection and then possessed as a consequence of the same habitual perfection rooted in the soul. Virginity, when possessed in a habitual and true way, frees from all disorder and even from subjection to instinct and nature, to the detriment of the fullness of charity".

Against the superiority of virginity over marriage it has been argued that marriage is a sacrament that produces grace by itself, while virginity consecrated to God by a vow is nothing more than a sacramental, which in itself does not confer grace. This doctrine, though true, in no way diminishes the superiority of virginity over marriage. Let us listen to a contemporary theologian giving the reason for this 20: "The sacramental reality of marriage cannot be the starting point for demonstrating a supernatural superiority of marriage in relation to the state of virginity, which is not consecrated by any special sacrament. Marriage is a sacrament that produces grace, signifying the union of Christ and the Church. Virginity goes beyond the quality of a sign: it is a superhuman and cordial attempt to realize-not only to signify-that total gift of self, as Church, to the Lord. Nor does it lack a sacramental foundation. It remains in the line of baptism, confirmation and eucharist, without needing a new sacrament for a new sacramental grace. Virginity is advancement and perfection in union with Christ. "Virginity consecrated to God," says B. Háring, "virginity consecrated to God is intimately related to chrism and confirmation, which are the sacraments that consecrate man for the service of God, and most particularly to the Eucharist, which is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which gives value to every

sacrifice of the heart”. Virginity is what marriage means supernaturally. And the grace of marriage is given so that married life retains its character of “symbol and expression of that reality which virginity most immediately embodies”: chaste, sacrificial and exclusive union with divine Love. It remains as a conclusion that virginity is a mystery. Something that can only be appreciated in faith and love. It is the most colossal human effort to enter into God, eliminating all human reason to one’s own existence. “The most harmful error when approaching the problem of chastity, especially in its virginal dimension, is to make it a question of morality,” says R. H. Barbe, referring no doubt to the ethics of the right middle ground confronted with the totality of self-giving that is the law of divine love. Virginity is a question of love. And a question of love for a God in whom no created perfection is lacking; a God who is not a substitute, but the insufficiently supplied in any earthly loving experience, always incapable of a definitive fullness. “The kingdom of heaven suffers violence” (Mt 11:12). Virginity is a subtle violence to the temporal, fused in the softer and more rapturous attraction of eternal love. All men feel that there must be “a purity and simplicity of love only possible in virginity”, and that God 20 Cf. Fr. Bernardino de Armeclada, Reflexiones teológicas sobre la virginidad, in Atas vol.3 (Madrid 1961) p.311-312.

of the II National Congress of Religious

P.III. Ascetical-mystical aspect of the religious life

He is the only Beloved capable of becoming everything for man, as St. Francis of Assisi expresses in his seraphic exclamation: “My God and all my things”.

182. 10. Perfect chastity and the theological life. We gather here the most important aspects of a precious article by a

contemporary theologian, dedicated to clarifying the intimate relationship between perfect chastity and the theological life, which, as is well known, constitutes the quintessence of the Christian life 2i. “The definition of virginity-abstention from the use of sensual pleasures in order to be intimately united to God-points out the objective connection of this virtue with the theological life: it exists only intrinsically associated, in its very formality, with a firm will to deepen in divine friendship. A formula of St. Thomas, still a living testimony of the patristic tradition, insists on this connection, justifying virginity by contemplation: “The end that makes virginity praiseworthy is consecration to divine things.)

Faith and virginity,

183. Faith is the first step in the movement that leads us to God, far from all that defiles; and, by introducing us into the sphere of the divine, it purifies us at the very root of our being 2S. This is why there is a profound affinity between faith and virginity, whose relations are well known. Faith presupposes, in fact, an affectivity rectified at its very root, in perfect connature with the mystery of health; it demands a putting in order of the whole affectivity, so that it lends itself with all its dynamism, without the least obstacle, to the beatifying encounter with God. Faith demands, in the first place, a purification of the sensitive affectivity, which in the present state of human nature always entails the risk of subjecting us to the impurity of base things and, by the same token, of compromising the purity of the gaze of faith that it conditions. And it demands this purification in a double depth: a purification of the carnal, that is, of all disordered sensible affectivity, of all adherence to things inferior to man, and, even more profoundly, a purification of the sensible itself, so that it may be constantly overcome toward its own interiority, so that it may be pure

transparency to spiritual things. In fewer words: faith aspires to gather from within all sensible affectivity in order to straighten it out, purify it and illumine it, raising it to its proper level. Need we recall the role that St. Thomas assigns to the gift of understanding: to make the spirit translucent in the pure light of Love? Does he not speak of “purity of spirit purified of images? “24. Faith also demands a rectification of the spiritual affectivity, so that it becomes docile and entirely submitted to God, that is, the detachment from spiritual impurity, the pride implied in it. Virginity calls for this same rectification of the sensitive affectivity: it consists precisely in the renunciation of disordered pleasure. It brings with it

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Cf. P. M. J. Le Guilou, O. P., Virginia et vie théolotale in the volume La chasteté (Editíons du Cerf, Paris 19S3) P-i3 iss. 2-2,152,5. Gf.

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2 272

“Munditia mentís depuratae a phantasmaübus* (2-2,8,7c).

Virginity is not entirely completed by this purity of spirit, which is adherence to God in the revelation of his mystery and of which it is, in the end, only a reflection on the flesh? In the very measure in which the sensibility finds itself, thanks to virginity, as if recast in the divine clarity, the spirit can give itself fully to God; instead of being an obstacle, the purified flesh constitutes a help. This explains the

connaturality that exists between virginity and the spirit of faith, this penetration into the depth and simplicity of the evangelical light. Virginity and faith both open on the beatitude of the “pure in heart”, for whom everything shines forth in the divine light. Were they not already intimately united, at their very source, in the sovereign gratuitousness of God’s love? b)

Hope and virginity.

184. Hope is that spiritual ardor which, trusting in the omnipotence of the divine word, unifies all our energies in its impulse toward God and sets them in motion for the conquest of the kingdom of heaven. Virginity has numerous affinities with this theological virtue. In the first place, this is evident in its negative aspect: impurity and despair - experience testifies - always go together. Impurity engenders despair, since the impure no longer hope in the mystery of God, of which they have lost the taste and which seems to them unreal and insipid. Despair breeds impurity, because everyone whose dynamism towards the future has been broken seeks compensation in the flesh. For this very reason, virginity that is not sustained by hope constitutes a heavy burden, which will not take long to get rid of. Hope is magnanimous in the pursuit of the work of sanctification; despair, on the other hand, signals the hour of dispersion, by snatching away the very spring of life. But this is even clearer in a positive way. Virginity empties the heart and establishes it in poverty; it strips it entirely so that God may be its only support and the only source of its energies. Is it necessary to point out its affinity with hope, which is the virtue ordered to what is not yet possessed, the virtue of trust in God? Virginity is entirely polarized to the conquest of a difficult and high priced good, which surpasses human forces left to themselves. Insofar as it is an expression of charity, virginity is an anticipation of the heavenly state. It is

responsible for setting in motion and purifying all our forces in order to offer them in sacrifice to God, under the motion of hope, which constitutes the dynamism of our being children of God. The person who has consecrated herself to the Lord knows very well, as her irrevocable decision testifies, that she is loved by God, and this gives to her abandonment to the Lord an ever more confident note, and to her impulse an ever more joyful and happy character. Exstatic in God, she is in a position to discover in the depths of her life the beatitude of poverty-the foundation of all the other beatitudes-which is the beatitude of hope. Hope, moreover, cannot walk without fear; and the importance of filial, reverential fear cannot be overemphasized in order to inspire and guard virginity. Filial fear, which avoids offending the Lord and losing him, puts the soul in an attitude that makes us respect our own mystery and that of others, and it is well known how close respect is to honor and beauty.

spiritual fear, so characteristic of virginity. This fear, finally, is, together with faith, the principle of humility, which envelops virginity in its atmosphere and gives us the sense of homage and of the radical impulse towards God. c)

Charity and virginity.

185. Virginity has its origin in charity and, in turn, is ordered-in the very purpose that makes it virtuous-towards that decentering of self and that union with God which is charity. No one is ever chaste except for love; and virginity is neither acceptable nor expansive except in the service of love. Virginity implies the consecration of one’s whole being to God. For this reason, it expresses in a particularly

vigorous and sensitive way what constitutes the very essence of charity, that is, the consecration of the whole man before the all of God: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Mt 2:2, 37). Virginity supposes, in the first place, the renunciation of that particularly profound and human mediation that spouses experience in their personal union, in view of a greater and more direct expansion of love for God and for all men. It refuses this natural condition of human love, which, through the home, should open itself to the whole human community, but which, because of its carnal limits, always runs the risk of particularizing and restricting this love. And it shuns it because at its root and in its very essence virginity has realized the presence of love in its purest form. Virginity, in fact, does not demand this renunciation that affects the being in the heart and that is the image of absolute renunciation, but in view of a total discovery of the love of God, proclaiming by this very fact that anything can be asked of us to affirm the absolutely unique rank that God occupies in our life. It proclaims that, in today’s world, the law of life in God consists in total renunciation. Only in this renunciation of what is perhaps the deepest in the human heart - a renunciation that does not involve contempt for human love, but is, on the contrary, a transfiguration of this love - can the full depth of our heart and the absolute requirement of divine love unfold with the incomparable grandeur of God. Charity, in fact, does not simply ask us to have the impression of giving ourselves to God with a more or less subjective fullness of gift: it asks of us the whole capacity of our heart. And the objective totality of this love that God demands of us and creates in us is only really perceived in the totality of renunciation. Virginity thus leads to the discovery of divine Love and to the discovery of our being children of God. Through the same renunciation we discover that our whole being is of God and for God, and that we love God in the

very Love that is Him. Virginity is, therefore, entirely polarized by the totality and transcendence of this love. But let us not forget that the very transcendence of this love constitutes the foundation of all other love. If the motto of virginity is “God alone,” it must be understood correctly. We cannot refer entirely to God without being, by that very fact, referring to all the beings that He has created gratuitously out of love. Virginity, by consecrating us to God, consecrates us to all men. If it forbids coveting the created support as such, since God must be the only source and the only end of our love, it nevertheless postulates, by its own impulse, the encounter with other beings through God, and invites us to welcome them all as an actual gift of God.

Thus virginity, far from diminishing love, expands it to infinity; and for this reason it opens up and manifests itself in those properly spiritual relationships, at the level of charity, in which one loves as Christ loved. It opens up in that fraternal love that reaches beings in their most intimate secret; in that love that can deceive nothing, since it always sees, through appearances, the mystery of being. Let us avoid, however, a misunderstanding. When we speak of a spiritual love, we do not mean a disincarnated love. Virginity, in fact, does not come to ruin the delicacy of human friendship between men, but to make it more profound. It accomplishes in a mysterious way the assumption of what it had sacrificed; it consecrates this transfiguration of the body by the spirit, this profoundly human harmony that allows man to give himself in the spontaneity and disinterestedness of true freedom. The virginal soul gives itself completely in its reference to God; it disposes itself to love infinite Love, and the magnificent

expression of the Curé of Ars is well known: “The heart of the saints is liquid”. Virginity thus leads to that fecundity at the level of faith which is spiritual motherhood. This is the fruit and at the same time the justification of the former. Only this virginity makes the being available. It is she who creates that Catholic heart capable of sheltering all beings, capable in the light of the great apostolic audacities”.

186. ii. Objections and errors against perfect chastity. To conclude this first article on the theoretical part of the virtue and vow of chastity we will briefly state the principal objections which have appeared against perfect chastity, especially in recent times. Some-such as the alleged superiority of marriage over virginity-have already been refuted in the preceding pages, so we will now confine ourselves to very brief indications 25, 1, ° Virginity is opposed to the laws of nature, ordained by God for the propagation of the species. Answer. It is not true. For the duty to propagate the species was imposed by God on the human race, but not on each individual in particular. Individual virginity always is and always will be an exception within the human race, and the exception confirms the law. In fact, the human species continues to grow and multiply, even if the cases of virginity also multiply. 2. ° The observance of perfect chastity is detrimental to the physical health of the individual. Answer. Perfect chastity does not harm the physical health of the individual, neither physiologically nor psychologically. Against the authority of physicians who have dared to affirm or suppose it (never prove it), there is the authority of other physicians, more serious and numerous, who scientifically disprove the hypotheses of the former. Examples of hysterism, hallucination and dementia occur in married people as well as in celibates. But, in the last analysis, if there were some isolated cases proven in favor of the former, they would not affect the general rule at all.

Enrique Albiol’s beautiful exposition, with slight retouching,

C. M., in his article Virginity in Actas del II Congreso nacional de religiosos vol-3 (Madrid 1961) p.313-317.

P.II. Asctico-mtsüco aspect of religious life

3.0 Perfect chastity hurts the right to marriage of those persons who would contract it precisely with those who refuse it Answer. It is true that the virginity or perfect chastity of a person can be contrary to the will of another person who is excited by the idea of joining her in marriage. But it would be very unjust to force one of them to renounce her vocation of virginity to please the other, especially when there is a divine vocation or call to virginity, “We must obey God rather than men” (Act 5:29).

4.0 The state of perfect chastity gives rise to inferiority complexes in many who consider themselves incapable of integrating into that state* Answer. The inferiority complex can occur inside and outside the virginal state; it is a fact that is related to the individual’s complexion, not to his state or gender of life. If the virginity of our neighbor gives rise to this complex in another, we must apply the remedy to the real cause, which is the misconception of the sufferer, without disturbing the one who, at most, is merely a pretext in the sick imagination of] the complexed one. Because a climate does not suit my organism I cannot complain about those who can enjoy it.

5*°

Marriage is a sacrament, virginity is not*.

Answer. But it does not follow that marriage, as a state, is superior to virginity or perfect chastity. It should not be forgotten that, if marriage symbolizes the union of Christ

with the Church, virginity realizes it in a much more intense way between Christ and the consecrated soul. Moreover, virginity or perfect chastity symbolizes the union of the persons of the Blessed Trinity, since it unites the soul with God without passing through the creature, as happens in marriage. The Church is very holy, but all her holiness comes from God; to represent the Church in the marriage ceremony is less than to represent the mutual communication of the divine persons in the total surrender made to them by consecrated virginity. If virginity lacks the grace peculiar to the sacrament, the sacrament lacks the grace peculiar to this consecration. They are distinct and independent graces; neither the former needs the latter, nor the latter the former. Virginity betroths the soul to God," says St. Ambrose, "and marriage betroths it to the creature; what goes from God to the creature goes from grace to grace. The sacrament of marriage increases ex opere operato sanctifying grace and grants special graces to fulfill the duties of that state; but also consecrated virginity-in virtue of the heroic act of charity which it entails and carries with it-increases ex opere operantis sanctifying grace and grants to him who solemnly professes it the pardon^ of all the temporal punishment due for his former sins 2¿. In short, the sanctifying effect of religious profession is more intense and profound than that of the sacrament of marriage.

6º Temptations against chastity are more violent in the state of virginity than in marriage* Answer. This is a purely gratuitous affirmation. Temptations depend largely on one's temperament and the environment in which one lives. The sanguine and lymphatic temperaments are the same in a state of chastity as in a state of virginity.

Cf. 2-2,189,3 ad 3* Cf. 2-2,189,3 ad 3*.

than in another. A sanguine or nervous celibate will be -more tempted than a bilious or lymphatic one because of his complexion, not because of his state* And as for the environment, it is already known that virgin souls defend themselves better from its sinful influence than those who are not* Any moralist of practical life can assure that the greatest number of sins against the sixth commandment are committed in the marital or premarital state. And it is the sin that harms, not the temptation. Anyway, if the objection were right, it would be a tribute to virginity, which is embellished and invigorated in the test. 7.0 Perfect chastity hinders the union of the dissenting Christian churches with the Catholic Church" because the latter demands perfect chastity of its priests, which the former do not demand of theirs. The difficulty that the perfect chastity imposed by the Catholic Church on her priests poses for the union of Christians has been greatly exaggerated. Protestants and schismatics-at least those who are educated-know very well that the Church of Rome, in demanding perfect chastity of her priests, does nothing more than keep alive the inheritance of an apostolic doctrine which they squandered. Common sense, free from prejudice, recognizes in all latitudes of the globe and in all religious areas-even pagan ones-that virginity is an element of greatness, nobility and superiority demanded by the priesthood for the most perfect performance of its supernatural mission. Let married priests from East and West come in good time to the bosom of the true Church of Christ, which will know how to smooth the roughness of their juridical situation; but do not ask that the Latin clergy be stripped of a prerogative that is the honor not only of their priesthood, but of all Christendom,

8º Virginity or perfect chastity is an occasion of pride and selfishness, fostering self-esteem and a certain contempt for

others. Answer. We admit that pride is not incompatible with virginity. Moreover, the enemy of souls can supplant the true concept of virginal dignity with an inordinate appreciation of one's own merit, which results in the disregard of those who are not favored with this privileged vocation. But can the thesis be made general? Are all the virgins in the Gospel parable statuesque? Is one proud because one is a virgin or in spite of being a virgin? Can virginity be the daughter or mother of egoism? No. The greatest examples of humility, abnegation and charity are owed by history to Christian virginity and to other souls of such a purity that they have deserved to be catalogued among the virgins themselves. Consult the saints and it is enough,

g.° Perfect chastity is a sign of impotence, of lack of character" of cowardice, hypocritically covering itself with the appearance of virtue. Answer. It is not cowardice to leave the comfortable environment in which others take refuge and to face the incomprehension of the majority, whose advice, conveniences and oppositions must be overcome like an obstacle course. Virginity or perfect chastity does not annul the impulses of the heart, it sublimates them. When a heart decides to fly the flag of virginity, swearing eternal fidelity to it, it knows that it has leaped into the arena to fight against the third enemy of the soul without making any concessions. She sweats blood and radiates light as she throbs in the world. He weeps and laughs in the fray, but he does not give up. On the universal stage of the

Some admire, others applaud, others criticize, others demand more, others are distracted or fall asleep; but who will dare to honestly say that the heart of an athlete to the divine is a shrunken, hypocritical and cowardly heart? io.°.

Virginity or perfect chastity is antisocial.

Answer. Society needs, on the contrary, virgin souls in love with their state and condition, as a counterweight to the ugly load of scandals and bad examples with which materialism overwhelms it, saturating it with vulgar propaganda. Virginity is the antidote to sensuality, a chronic ailment that afflicts man, becoming more acute from time to time. As ordinary remedies are not enough when the evil is extraordinary, neither is the salutary example of conjugal chastity - seriously compromised - enough to raise the morale of a people that prefers pleasure to duty by habit and system. The rude people who do not believe in virginity, because they do not know its beauty and value, can only be saved by virginity. Darkness is driven away by light; and if the darkness covers an enormous area, the ordinary light of an ordinary magisterium is not enough, the heroic magisterium of an exemplarity that overwhelms and drags is needed. Such is the mission of Christian virginity: to glorify God by purifying the world. Who will say that the Little Brothers of Jesus of Charles de Foucauld, or the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, or the little nuns of the Assumption, the lady catechists, the Nazarenes, etc., are antisocial or a hindrance to society? And to whom is it hidden that the secret of their beneficent influence-constant and triumphant-in society lies precisely in their angelic virginity?

n.° Virginity or perfect chastity is opposed to the complete development of the personality in the one who professes it.
Answer. To see if virginity mutilates or not the human personality, it would be enough to open a gallery of authentic personalities, of those that honor humanity, and to find out the state to which they belong. Many and very respectable, to marriage. Others, no less numerous and equally heroic, to the Catholic priesthood and to the

religious state in either of their two sexes. To be a virgin all one's life is not worth just anyone: one needs a vocation and a great character, the same as to be a personality. Hence it follows that in the married state there may be no personalities; but in the virginal state or in the state of perfect chastity a serious personality is demanded of each individual. It is clear that not all celibates are on a par with St. Francis Xavier or St. Teresa of Jesus, but are there personalities in the other field that can be equated with these two?

Article 2

LA

PRACTICE

Having examined in the previous article the main theoretical issues surrounding the vow and virtue of chastity, let us now look at the main problems that arise in the exercise and practice of the vow and virtue.

i*

Chastity, a positive and fruitful virtue

187* When speaking of the practice and exercise of perfect chastity, it is necessary, first of all, to get the true focus of the question right. Despite what might be suggested by the triple and painful renunciation that it inevitably entails-we have already spoken of this in the preceding article-chastity is not a negative and sterile virtue, but an eminently positive and fruitful one. If it is true that it has to repress one of the most vehement instincts of man's animal nature, it does not seek thereby to annul or extinguish the impetuous

and overwhelming current of human affectivity, but only to open for it a much more noble and elevated channel in the supernatural order, flowing entirely toward God. This point of view is of such practical importance that we consider it almost impossible for anyone who insists on approaching the problem in its merely negative aspect of repression of the natural instinct to guard perfect chastity. In the short or long run - or rather in the short run - he will almost inevitably fail: the repressed and unchannelled nature will claim its rights and the dam will break, dragging down in its overflow the equilibrium and peace of conscience, the religious vocation and often even the Christian faith itself. Perhaps this is the ultimate and deepest root of the painful apostasies that sometimes occur among persons consecrated to God. The religious who aspires to perfect control and mastery of his natural instincts must try, first and foremost, to channel his affective currents, exciting in his soul the love of God until it becomes in him a true obsession and the greatest illusion of his life. Everything else will be given to him in addition and almost without any effort. Without this positive channeling of the problem of purity, failure is almost certain and can be taken for granted. With purely negative repression alone, without a joyful ideal of holiness, he will only succeed in storing up a formidable biological reserve, which, when it inevitably overflows one day, will sweep away in its impetuous current everything that tries belatedly to impede its passage. 27 “The greatest difficulty of chastity,” writes Father Perrin in this regard, “does not lie in the rebellions of the flesh or in the corruption of the environment, but in the very excellence of the work undertaken. It is not only a matter of restraining the force of instinct, but of integrating this force into the life of the spirit. 27 Fr. José María Perrin, O. P., Lavirginidad (Colección Patmos, Madrid i$S4) p.163-164.

PJII. The asetico-mystical aspect of religious life

mere defensive virtue, it would not be even remotely Christian chastity; it would be that negative attitude so discredited in our days, and rightly so. It is conquering and positive, that is, it unites sentiment with the ends of divine love; the water that used to be lost in sterile and nauseating pools is now used to irrigate gardens and orchards, according to the Augustinian image. Chastity will only be attained-or at least it will only be on the way to attaining it-to the extent that it allows the soul to advance more resolutely along the paths of Love. This advance must include the instinct and all the affectivity which, more or less, depends on it; otherwise it would become a foreign body, a principle of division. Here we can apply the old sentence of Greek medicine: “The organism only feeds on what it has digested”. It is necessary for the soul to assimilate this foreign force to the love with which it has identified its life. An obsessive, frightened chastity, always in question, is not Christian chastity, nor above all virginity. Let me not be reproached for my thinking: chastity is essentially a resolution of will and, precisely for this reason, it is always possible with the help of grace and human effort.

Presupposing this positive and joyful approach to the problem of perfect chastity, let us now see what obligations the vow of perfect chastity imposes on the religious and the sins that its non-fulfillment would imply.

2.

Obligations imposed by the vow of chastity 28

188. 1. °

The religious is bound by the vow of chastity:

To renounce marriage.

2. To abstain from whatever is already forbidden by the sixth and ninth commandments of the law of God.

In other words, the vow of chastity obliges: 1.

Celibacy.

2. °

To keep the virtue of chastity in all its breadth.

The vow of chastity, therefore, does not imply for the religious any obligation that any unmarried person does not have to fulfill, in virtue of the commandments of God; but it imposes such obligations on him by a new title, that of the vow. The religious who breaks the vow of chastity commits two different sins, because with the same fault he breaks two different obligations; he sins more or less gravely against the sixth or ninth commandments, and also more or less gravely against the vow. There is another difference: the unmarried person, obliged to chastity by virtue of the law of nature, can marry; the religious has renounced it. 28 In this section and in the three following ones, we take up verbatim, with slight retouches*, the doctrine of the aforementioned work A Brief Treatise on the Religious State 11.225$s.

The definition of the vow makes it clear that one cannot sin against the sixth and ninth commandments without violating the vow of chastity. Any sin against the virtue of chastity is also a sin against the vow and reciprocally, for here there is no distinction or parity of matter as in the vows of poverty and obedience.

3.

Sins against the vow of chastity

189. We have spoken of the proper object of the sixth and ninth commandments. Every interior or exterior act by which the will tends with full warning and full consent toward the act forbidden by the said commandments or toward the enjoyment that accompanies it, is always grave sin, because here we are dealing with chastity properly so called, which, unlike poverty, for example, does not admit of parsimony of matter. Moralists agree on this point. For it is understood that to explicitly violate the law of chastity not only by acts, but also by fully consented desires or thoughts, is to seek to ruin the work of God by contravening providential dispositions of extreme importance. This does not mean that every sin against chastity is mortal. Here, as in other cases, for the sin to be mortal in conscience, the three conditions must coincide: a) Gravity of matter, b) Full knowledge of the grave malice of the act, that is, it must be clearly seen that the act is gravely illicit, c) Full consent of the will.

The first condition is always fulfilled in formal sins against chastity; the other two conditions are not always fulfilled, either because a certain inadvertence prevents one from clearly realizing the immorality of the act, or because the will allows itself to be more or less carried away by the attraction of the voluptuous sensation, without, however, positively desiring it. It is probable, moreover, that among the little or not at all educated people who live in the world, especially in more or less uneducated environments, sins against chastity are often nothing more than material sins, either for lack of knowledge, or because of deficiency of the will, which is very weakened by the violence of the passions and the force of vicious habits, innate or acquired.

Observations. The following observations are very important and very proper to dissipate many troubles and anxieties of conscience: 1. a For there to be grave sin of impurity, it is necessary that it is a question of interior or exterior acts against chastity properly so called, taken in the strict sense. There are those who do not know how to distinguish between two very different things: impurity or lust and sensuality or immortification. Some relate to chastity many thoughts, imaginations, impressions and exterior acts which do not properly belong to it, but are acts of simple sensuality, which admits of parity of matter. Such are, very often, a certain excessive freedom given to the imagination, to thought and to the senses; some freedom in the treatment of one's own body; certain immodesties with oneself; some unsuitable familiarities with others; certain dangerous readings, *etc.* All these acts of dissimulated sensuality are liable to become a cause of grave sin: they indirectly offend against chastity inasmuch as they cause more or less proximate danger of consenting to the temptation or carnal delectation which they may provoke. 2. a In order for there to be grave sin of impurity, it is necessary that it be a matter of acts against chastity properly so called, directly willed. a) To will directly a thing is to make it the formal end of the act. For example, to throw oneself into the water to put an end to one's days or to accept the invitation of a bad companion with the declared purpose of committing a sin, are perverse actions directly willed. b) To will a thing indirectly is not to will it in itself, but to put an action of which it is foreseen with greater or lesser probability that that thing will follow. For example, to throw oneself into the water to save a child who is in danger of drowning, with more or less clear foresight of one's own

death, which in fact follows (death is only indirectly willed: heroic act of charity). To go for a walk with a bad companion without bad intention, but knowing from experience that one exposes oneself to a certain occasion of sin (e.g., to criticism, backbiting, etc.).

3. a) Conditions that are necessary in order to be able to be able to take refuge in matters of chastity to the theory of the indirect voluntary, that is, to perform without sin an action that will produce with more or less probability carnal movements: a) The action, if it is not necessary, at least must be useful; otherwise there would be no valid reason to expose oneself to the danger of such movements. b) The intention must be straight, without certain second intention or secret desire to procure indirectly the forbidden pleasure. In other words: the action must be carried out because it is necessary or useful. c) The greater the danger of provoking sinful movements, the more serious must be the motives for taking the action. d) The greater the danger for one to consent to the forbidden pleasure that one experiences (it will be deduced from one's own experience), the more pressing must be the reasons for acting.

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Assuming these conditions, the action can be carried out with certainty of conscience, notwithstanding the foresight of the secondary effect, whatever it may be, because what is not wanted directly in itself or in its cause, is not sin. 1. a It is not a sin against chastity to touch any part of the body if the necessary or convenient care of cleanliness, hygiene, or

health is sufficient to do it. Nor is there any reason to worry if disturbing ideas or disordered movements result from it. 2. a One can also take a shower, or a bath, or engage in gymnastic exercises with a view to physical development, in spite of the carnal movements that may follow, on condition that one feels the willpower required not to indulge voluntarily in such sensations. It is said “not to indulge voluntarily”, because a distinction must be made between purely imaginative and entirely involuntary indulgence, which can be experienced against one’s will, and avoidable, illicit indulgence, accepted, desired and willed by the will. 3. a If for reasons of studies it is necessary or truly useful to read certain passages of certain authors, to study certain subjects that by their nature or as a consequence of one’s dispositions produce imaginations or impressions contrary to purity, there is no obligation for this reason to suspend such readings or studies. In all these cases that produce two kinds of effects, one good or useful, wanted directly, and the other bad (disordered sensations), not wanted or desired, one acts licitly when, having serious and proportionate reason to want the good effect, one is content to tolerate the bad effect that one cannot prevent. But it is clear that prudence is necessary, because of the danger of indulging in the representations or sensations provoked. There will certainly be venial sin, for example, if these impressions come from readings made out of unhealthy curiosity; and if it is foreseen, by past experience of one’s own weakness, that one will certainly consent to subsequent carnal delectation, such reading becomes a matter of grave sin, since, although indirectly, one desires evil. 4. a When, having committed a fault, there is doubt as to its gravity, because the three conditions necessary for mortal sin are not clearly fulfilled, a religious of delicate conscience, who habitually observes the vows and the rule, may always resolve the doubt in his favor, unless there is evidence to the contrary. Therefore, for this reason, he will not abstain from communion-prior to a

fervent act of contrition, just in case-although for the tranquility of his conscience and for his own spiritual formation, it will be good for him to expose the case to his confessor. 5. a Let no one be distressed if, because of his better present instruction, he notices that a certain fault committed previously, and whose matter had hitherto appeared to be a slight one, is in reality a matter of grave sin. Such a sin, committed with that ignorance, was only materially grave, but not formally; there is, therefore, no reason to worry about the past.

4.

Practical applications

The rules of morality that have just been recalled are clear, and the examples given show that, in general, they are easy and safe to apply. Nevertheless, it must be recognized that, since the reality is often very complex, doubts and anxieties can arise in regard to chastity that cause great suffering, especially to delicate souls. The following observations, by shedding new light on this matter, can dispel fears that are almost always ill-founded and help these souls of upright intention to live in peace. When one strives to observe loyally the obligations of chastity, this should not be an occasion of sorrow, but, on the contrary, a source of holy joys. 190, i.a. “Evil thoughts”. This expression is commonly used to point out thoughts that have as their object representations contrary to purity. But it must be stated as a principle that the thought in itself has no moral value; it is neither good nor bad in itself. Thought, considered in isolation, is never sin; evil resides only in the will. Therefore,

a thought becomes properly evil if for its sake the will takes morbid pleasure in it or is determined to do something against the law of God. a) If, then, a representation contrary to chastity is offered to the spirit, it is not therefore an evil thought, but the thought of an evil thing, which is quite different. The representation will only be an evil and guilty thought when one voluntarily dwells on it, because of the unhealthy delight it provokes. Sin will result from voluntary indulgence in the evil thought. Apart from this, there is no reason to be disturbed by impure imaginations, no matter how long they persist, nor to accuse oneself of them in confession, no more or less than of the importunity with which a fly stubbornly rests on one's face. If one has to avoid disturbance when one is a victim of such thoughts, it is all the more reason to avoid manifesting discomfort and displeasure about it with external signs, which would only produce fatigue and contribute to the persistence of such representations and provoke the laughter of the bystanders. If one doubts to have "consented" more or less, that is to say, to have stopped unnecessarily in such thoughts because in them one experienced certain

If one has had impure imaginations, it will suffice to dissipate all anxiety, without thinking about it again, to say in the weekly confession that one has had impure imaginations, and that one is accused of them to the extent that one may have admitted them voluntarily.

bj To think about certain more or less convenient things, and even to dwell on them out of mere intellectual curiosity, is not a sin against chastity, since, as has already been said, a thought, as a thought, is never a sin. Does it follow from this

that one can easily allow oneself to place all kinds of representations before the eyes of one's spirit or imagination? Certainly not. It would be to accustom oneself to dangerous liberties, to risk losing delicacy of conscience, and, above all, to indulge in the carnal delectation that may suddenly surprise us. Our corrupt nature takes pleasure in clumsy representations, and as soon as these are presented to the spirit or to the imagination, concupiscence is awakened, which easily drags the will after itself. This is the real danger in taking such licenses. It is extremely imprudent to play with fire!

191. 2.a "Bad dreams". What has been said about non-voluntary thoughts applies a fortiori to dreams. These cannot constitute sin, since they are produced while one is asleep, when one is not capable of attention or free will. Consequently, there is no reason for disturbance if, on awakening, some dream of an impure character comes to mind, even if pollution has followed it. There is no reason to confess it, since there has been no sin, and one can then receive communion. The only thing to do is to try not to think about it again. On the other hand, one would sin if, before falling asleep, he had intentionally set up a cause capable of producing bad dreams, with the intention of provoking them; for example: bad reading, clumsy imaginations, *etc.* In this case there is guilt, whether or not the provoked dream comes afterwards. The fault arises from the perverse intention. He also sins who, upon waking up completely, consents or takes pleasure in the bad dream he has just had.

192. 3.a. "Bad desires". Desire is evil only when a forbidden pleasure is deliberately desired; and it is guilty even if the desire is not acted upon, since it is the desire of the will that makes the will responsible. The desire of appetite, which comes from the sensitive appetite and is not a sin, must be

distinguished from the former. To desire something is not always to want to do it. In very hot weather one can feel a great desire to drink, and yet be determined not to do so, out of mortification or a spirit of reparation, or simply for reasons of health.

In the same way, it can happen that one feels a strong desire to procure some pleasure forbidden by the vow of chastity, without consenting to it; resistance to this desire will bring him great merit. There will be sin only if, giving assent to the will, one deliberately indulges in the pleasure to which the sensitive appetite tends. The gravity of the sin will be proportionate to the degree of consent. -Evil desires" (neither more nor less than "evil thoughts") in which the will does not intervene should not be a cause of disturbance. The best attitude with regard to them is to distract oneself by turning one's attention to another attractive object: mathematics, poetry, music, *etc.* To feel a certain fear of having stopped in some of these bad desires is already a sufficient indication that they have not been fully voluntary.

193 4.a. Looks. What has been said of thoughts must be applied to looks, for they are to the sensible order what thoughts are to the intellectual order. Only those glances voluntarily directed at inconvenient, dangerous, indecent, or unseemly objects for the purpose of delighting in the forbidden pleasure that their contemplation can provoke are guilty. If objects of this kind are involuntarily presented to one's sight without one's dwelling on them, there is evidently no sin. And even if one looks at the object out of mere intellectual curiosity, without intending carnal delectation, there is no sin against chastity either. For this

reason, if such a condition is expressly assumed, certain works of art (paintings, sculptures) can be contemplated without sin, either with the intention of instruction, or for the purely artistic enjoyment that goes with this contemplation. But in this matter even greater prudence and reserve are necessary than in reading. If there is no reason to be disturbed uselessly because of a passing curiosity, nor to see sin against chastity where there is none, it is very important to watch over one's gaze so as not to excite concupiscence and to expose oneself to sin recklessly. It is evident, for example, that the adolescent who feeds his imagination on the reading of a magazine full of provocative illustrations, is responsible for the unhealthy attraction that such images awaken in him. On the other hand, religious should be much more reserved than the laity when visiting museums and walking through parks, squares and public gardens where today there is a profusion of nude statues. They will be scandalized if they are seen looking with excessive curiosity, and especially if they stop in front of such representations. There are museums where religious should never enter, both to avoid being a scandal and to avoid exposing themselves to serious temptations against the virtue of purity. The same must be said of certain beaches during the bathing season.

C.5. Chastity

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5.a. Touching. There is no sin in touching any part of the body, provided the touching is justified (e.g., for reasons of hygiene), a) Touching unnecessarily, even if there is no evil intention, is at most a fault for sensuality or immortification; but such actions can easily provoke voluptuous sensations in which the will risks consenting, in which case there would be sin of impurity, b) If touching oneself in order to procure

sinful sensations is a grave fault, it seems useless to add that it would be particularly deplorable if with this intention one were to permit such actions with other persons. In the accusation of dishonest sins committed with another, the name of the accomplice is not to be made known to the confessor, even when he is the principal culprit; but the priest may, with grave reason, impose the obligation to make it known to the superior. Apart from the intervention of the confessor, it will be prudent that, if during the years of his formation he sees someone solicited to evil by a companion, he should inform the superior confidentially, with a view to the common good. Such a revelation will even be obligatory, even when secrecy has been promised, if silence could cause serious harm to the group to which the person concerned belongs; for example, if by not revealing it, the guilty party would be given the opportunity to repeat the incitement to evil with others, which will almost certainly happen if nothing is said.

c) It is well to know that at a certain age, and from time to time, ordinarily during sleep, there are usually, and from time to time, certain commotions of the sexual organs accompanied by pollutions, which often cause disturbance and sometimes anguish and distress to certain delicate and pure souls, although there is no reason to be the least bit disturbed. Pollutions or nocturnal effusions are a natural phenomenon that occurs especially in young people, particularly if they are chaste, and occur with more or less frequency according to temperaments. It is not an indication of disease, nor does it imply responsibility; therefore, it is not culpable, even if in dreams there had been a kind of complacency dreamed of, but which was fully rejected on awakening. As in all matters relating to chastity, there will only be fault, and this will be serious, when pollution is provoked voluntarily in the waking state. There will be no sin if it is the consequence of a necessary or very useful action,

provided that there is no indulgence on the part of the will. But if it occurs, for example, on the occasion of some reading done out of unhealthy curiosity, therefore, unjustified, there will be a fault, which can be serious, especially if experience has shown the danger of such readings.

P. II. Ascetical-mhtical aspect of religious life.

6. Carnal movements are also phenomena of a physiological order to which no attention should be paid if they are involuntary or if they arise from some act that is the cause of a justified double effect, provided, of course, that there is no deliberate indulgence in the delectation that may follow from such acts. If they were due to some totally useless action, it would be prudent to abstain from it in order to avert the danger of indulging in delectation. When, without the intervention of the will, such movements persist with violence, they are to be combated indirectly, either by changing one's occupation when possible, or by acts of love of God, or by showing displeasure; and if, in spite of everything, they persist, one must arm oneself with patience and preserve the peace of one's soul. These movements are sin (it must not be forgotten) only if they are provoked directly with perverse intention or if one admits with full will the pleasure that follows from them, in the case of not having provoked them.

7. Readings. The preparation of lessons and examinations sometimes makes necessary or useful certain readings capable of provoking thoughts, imaginations and disturbances contrary to the cleanliness of the soul: let them then take care not to worry, but simply to be forewarned not to accept the delectation that might follow from them. Those who have obtained a license from the Holy See to read forbidden books have a grave obligation to guard them with

such care that they do not fall into the hands of others (en, 1403). By the fact of having obtained a license, whoever it may be who granted it, no one is in any way exempt from the prohibition of natural law which forbids the reading of those books which cause him immediate spiritual danger (cn. 1405).

Evidently, it would be a grave sin against chastity to read manifestly dishonest books with the intention of satisfying evil instincts and to experience voluptuous sensations and to indulge in them. To read such books out of pure curiosity is in itself nothing but venial sin; but often there will be in it depraved intention which one tries to conceal and danger of indulging in forbidden pleasure. In such a case there could be a grave fault. It should be noted, along with the moralists, that it is difficult to give precise norms in the matter of readings, since it is necessary to take into consideration not only the character of the work and the reasons that motivate its reading, but also the particular dispositions of the readers. Nevertheless, religious can never be too prudent on this point. Besides the positively bad books, which abound today more than ever, and whose reading, even for mere curiosity's sake, contains so many pei
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gros para todos, there are many other books that do not suit religious in any way. Such are the more or less frivolous novels and other works that deal only with human love, worldly life and amusements, marriage and marital infidelities, *etc.* The religious who knows the duties of his state has much more serious things to do than to waste time in such readings. If for the people of the century some of

these books are anodyne, for those who have professed perfect chastity they can become the cause of many temptations, from which perhaps it will not always be easy to defend oneself, all the more so since such readings do nothing to favor the interior life and the spirit of prayer. Therefore, one must decide to sacrifice them for the love of God and for one's own spiritual interests, notwithstanding the subtle arguments with which corrupt nature may want to justify them.

5.

The struggle for purity

197, 1. Necessary and always possible struggle. The religious should esteem and love the holy virtue of purity as a most precious treasure. Since chastity must ensure the dominion of the spirit over the flesh, components of our being that live in constant struggle after original sin, continuous efforts are required, which exceed our natural strength. Chastity is not contrary to, but superior to nature. As a virtue to be won in hard warfare, it presupposes magnanimous and persevering efforts, subjected to energetic discipline, and in accordance with a particular strategy involving the use of natural and supernatural means, both of which are indispensable if victory is to be achieved and the eminent purity demanded by our state is to be practiced. 2. It cannot be denied that the struggle for chastity is often hard, even for the most faithful and careful souls. But, in reality, the virtue of purity is no more difficult than the other virtues: justice, charity, humility, patience, etc.; and experience proves that, when one desires to remain chaste with determination and integrity, the constant effort to attain it becomes all the less fatiguing the more it is sustained by the supernatural aids which religious life so abundantly offers. This effort forges in the mind a

certain attitude of heroic courage which, in turn, creates the propitious environment in which perfect chastity attains its fullness of life. The habit of resisting victoriously all the onslaughts of passion without ever giving up makes the struggle easy and spares the precision of battling to life and death against such a tenacious enemy.

Chastity, whether preserved or regained (for it can be regained if lost), is essentially a conquest of the will aided by the grace of God. When it comes to purity, one should not fall into the illusion of imagining that with time one will be free from its struggles, and that at a certain age the enemy is totally and definitively vanquished. It is true that the vehemence of passion diminishes with age, but it never disappears completely. 198.

3.

Three degrees of perfection in the virtue of

Since this virtue has its root in the will, it presents various degrees of perfection. chastity.

a)

At

the first degree, the will, which is still weak, does not have full control over the appetites.

y

imagination;

hence the struggle more or less

b) In the second degree, the will, already exercised by virtuous habit, strengthened by repeated victories and made more master of the senses, imagination and affections, triumphs more easily over the assaults of the adversary. c) In the most perfect degree, the will is so firmly established in the love of God that the pleasures of the flesh have no attraction for it; temptations are rare, and sometimes they even disappear altogether.

199. 4. Struggle as long as life. Although we know of some saints who, by a very special favor of heaven, reached the most perfect degree of purity, most of them, however, and often the most illustrious, had to struggle to the end of their lives against the assaults of the flesh. For our encouragement, Providence has deigned to allow that these saints, in spite of their eminent virtues, had to struggle throughout life, like the common mortals, for the integrity of purity. This will probably be our case. We are men, that is, composed of spirit and matter; we will always have to reckon with this reality and with the violent opposition between the flesh and the spirit. There will be, then, a relentless struggle between the two adversaries; a struggle in which discouragement and fatigue must never be admitted, even though weapons may have to be taken up a thousand times; a struggle which must be carried on with courage, without fear, anxiety or anxiety, since chastity is based on respect and love, not on terror.

No change was made in our fallen nature the day we promised God perfect chastity; we must, therefore, continue to count on the body and on the blind strength of its instincts. Apart from the fact that the body is as much ours as the soul, and with the body, as with the soul, we must give glory to the Lord. Religious practice this in an excellent

way by the guardianship of chastity. The world does not want to recognize the dominion of God over the human body; hence the cult of chastity.

C .5. Chastity

The religious oppose to such an overflow of sensuality, to such a practical denial of God's dominion over the body, the unbridled craving for pleasure of the senses and immorality, which disregards the barriers imposed by the divine law. To such an overflow of sensuality, to such a practical denial of God's dominion over the body, religious oppose chastity as a tribute due to the sacred rights of the Creator, while at the same time proving the possibility of fully observing the most superhuman of the evangelical counsels. By assuring the dominion of the spirit over the flesh and of the will over instinct, purity maintains the body in its true function as the docile servant of the soul and restores in us the order established by God. Since the more a man masters the animal portion of his being, the more he will be a man, it is evident how excellent perfect chastity, while glorifying God, gives the religious the fullness of his being and makes him a complete man. 200.

5.

How to capitulate in the struggle for chastity As has already been said, the battle to preserve chastity generally lasts a lifetime; but if one has fought hard and never conceded any truce to the enemy, it becomes less difficult with time. The essential thing in this combat is not to lose heart at any moment and to persevere in the use of the means that infallibly assure victory. Now experience teaches that every year a certain number of religious, mostly young men, give up their arms because they find this battle too hard; they judge that it will be impossible for them to observe perfect

chastity, and so they return to the world at the expiration of their vows or after having obtained a dispensation from them. It is certain that among them there may be some with regard to whom a mistake was made in admitting them to profession. There is nothing strange in the fact that these religious, after some time of trial, withdraw from religious life. But the departures that can be explained in this way are few in number; experience also shows that, in the majority of cases, there is true desertion, which almost always recognizes as its principal cause the difficulties that have arisen in the fulfillment of the obligations attached to the vow of chastity.

Let us see briefly how, after having courageously kept chastity for several years, the religious can then find himself in great difficulty in observing it and, therefore, in the painful necessity of leaving the religious life. The religious who in such a way surrenders arms and capitulates was certainly chaste in the years of his formation. In the Aspirancy and Minor Novitiate

He jubilantly kept a total, constant, perfect purity, which perhaps had not known any serious tear, or a purity meritoriously restored, thanks to the efforts of the will, which regained control over the sensual instincts. During the novitiate, he affirmed himself in the practice of this “holy virtue”, in spite of the difficulties of age, and made his first vows convinced by his own experience that it was possible and relatively easy for him to observe the obligations of chastity, as well as those of poverty and obedience. During the time of his scholasticate he continued to struggle energetically, making use of all the natural and supernatural means that were recommended to him, and he was victorious. During the first period of his life in community,

faithful to those means, he remained vigilant, mortified, pious, humble and sincere, so that for him everything went on normally, and although temptations were not lacking, he continued to triumph. But the life of the community, which is larger, “easier” and “freer” than that of the house of formation, demands greater efforts to avoid any weakness, and, unfortunately, little by little, the will, which until then had been firm and energetic, gave way and weakened in this young religious. Hence negligence and then omissions in the exercises of piety, delays in getting up, vanity and excessive attiredness in the care of his person, carelessness and neglect of the practices of mortification, certain weaknesses with regard to sensuality at table and elsewhere, imprudent liberties granted to the senses, etc., all of which goes on demonstrating to the naked eye that the flesh is fortified to the detriment of the spirit. As the spirit weakens, the flesh takes the lead and becomes more demanding, the attraction and fascination of the world is felt more strongly, and the imagination only loosely pushes aside the representations that disturb it. As a consequence, temptations multiply and become more and more violent and persistent; one resists them with difficulty, and one commits venial faults, first of all, and then serious ones. As time goes by, they are frequently repeated, so that bad habits arise or reappear, and soon become tyrannical. Parallel to the sins of sensuality and impurity, the faults against poverty multiply many times, which serve as fuel for sensuality, vanity and the worldly spirit, all of which is wood that feeds the fire…. Finally, the demands of the senses become so strong and impetuous that the will, dismantled and alone (since it has completely neglected prayer or has reduced it to the mechanical recitation of meaningless formulas, and if it receives communion, it does so out of routine), it capitulates completely and gives up the struggle. The unfortunate religious ends up by losing faith in his vocation, since, not understanding-certainly through his own fault-the things of

God, he has come to persuade himself more or less that perfect chastity is beyond his strength. Thus, after having tasted for a long time the intimate joys that chastity affords to those who have the courage to observe it completely, he now rejects it as an impossible burden to bear, and goes off into the world in search of the paltry pleasures that his senses demand and which he had resolutely renounced in order to give himself entirely to the service of God and souls.

317

Chastity 6,

Temptations against chastity and how to overcome them

We have already said how, in matters of chastity, the struggle usually lasts as long as life itself, unless there is a very special grace, which God rarely grants. 201*

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all,

but vary:

a) With temperaments; for this reason there are souls tempted more often and with greater violence than others.
b) With age; temptations are greater in youth and usually

diminish with the years. c) With other circumstances: relics of the past life, present occupations, relations with the world, *etc.*

We must also bear in mind the designs of God, who, without ever allowing anyone to be tempted beyond his strength, unless he has unwisely exposed himself to danger, consents to harsher trials in certain souls, so as to be better glorified by his faithfulness. 202*

2.

Three sources of temptations against chastity: 1. a We ourselves are our own enemy because of the concupiscence that always accompanies us everywhere. This is the first and principal cause of the difficulties that must be overcome in order to preserve chastity. 2. a The devil, to whom many of the suggestions that induce us to sin are to be attributed. He can work on the faculties of our lower nature: the senses, the imagination and the sensibility. As the bitter enemy of our souls, he does not desist as long as he sees any possibility of dragging our will into sin. 3. a The world, which, today more than ever, is paganized; because it does not know God and his law, and because it lacks the notion of sin, it unleashes unbridled sensuality everywhere and unceasingly stokes the fire of concupiscence in hearts and spirits.

Temptation is not sin. . Whatever may be or may be the thoughts and representations that temptation gives rise to, there will never be any sin if they occur in spite of us and if we resist them. Let it be well remembered that neither the suggestion or representation of evil, however lively and tenacious it may be, even to the point of obsession, nor the delectation or sensible pleasure that the sensitive appetite may experience as a consequence of such representations, are faults if the will does not indulge in them freely. They

constitute a danger only because of the risk that the will runs of allowing itself to be carried away by them.

P.I. The asetico-mystical aspect of religious life

a) There can be no grave sin (sin of thought, desire or deed) except by complete and conscious consent to the evil suggested, or to the delectation experienced, provided that it is a matter directly contrary to chastity. b) One can be morally certain of not having fully consented to the temptation: -if, in spite of the suggestion and sensible pleasure that accompanies it, one experiences disgust and weariness at being thus tempted; -if one has prayed; -if one has made efforts to turn away from evil; -if one feels disposed not to offend God; -if one habitually does not yield to evil inclinations; -if one has a horror of impurity, *etc.*

If it is found that the resistance was weak, incomplete, or that there was a moment of hesitation, there may be a fault, but only a venial one. Delicate or timorous consciences are mainly those who, after temptations against chastity, experience doubts and fears of having consented to something. These souls should be greatly encouraged by the following words of St. Alphonsus Liguori 29: “The person with a timorous conscience must be certain that he is in the grace of God if he is not certain that he has fallen into sin; for it is impossible, when one is in good dispositions, for the will to rebel against God without knowing it in an evident way. The opposite is true of those who give themselves over to vices.

Those who fear God, say theologians, and doubt whether they have consented to sin, this very doubt is an argument that they have not committed it. On the contrary, he who easily grants himself liberties in matters of chastity and who often consents to temptations, when he doubts, may believe

that he has consented. In the latter case, confession is required before communion. 204. 4. How to proceed in temptations against chastity. Experience and psychology teach that temptation is strengthened by restlessness, confusion and fear. The most effective thing is to despise it and to hold firmly to the principle that to feel is not to consent. To be troubled is usually more the effect of self-love and lack of humility than a sign of love of God and fear of offending God.

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Chastity

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to him. Moreover, confusion does not produce any good, but rather weakens the soul's energies, diminishes the freedom of the spirit, and serves as an aid to the devil. Therefore, peace and trust in God must be preserved in all temptations, even in the most violent and persistent ones. In these cases, above all, temptations become an excellent occasion to glorify God, as a testimony of our fidelity, and an abundant source of merit for the soul.

2° To divert one's attention immediately. Experience also teaches us that, ordinarily, temptations make little impression on the soul when, from the beginning, one refuses to pay attention to them and occupies one's mind with other matters with all possible application, even if without violence. Victories in the struggle for chastity are all the easier the less one thinks of the struggle. a) To put away the "evil thought" not by simple repulsion of the will, but by promptly replacing it with another thought; for, as it is often said, "one nail is pulled out with another". Direct the attention to another object, e.g., to some interesting reading

or to some absorbing research. If the feelings are disturbed and the danger becomes greater, it will be convenient to change of occupation and to be distracted or to walk in the open air… b) This indirect way of combating temptations against chastity by means of a determined, but calm and even joyful reaction, is the best, because it leaves the spirit completely free, does not tire and is always in our hands; it demands, however, a determined and energetic will. Here courage is shown by fleeing, and the best way to fight is cunning. It would be unwise and dangerous to want to fight directly, because the attention paid to the "evil thought" and the "evil desire" to fight them would only serve to fortify them. c) It is also a good tactic to resist them together. This means that nothing should be compromised with sensual delight or pleasure, which leads to consent. It is very imprudent to compromise a little in this matter, because one never knows at what point one will stop. One must be intransigent, but with calm and gentle intransigence, so that resistance may be more resolute. The reason why certain souls find so much difficulty in preserving perfect chastity is that they are not entirely determined to concede nothing to the enemy. They forget that there is no chastity, and that chastity does not admit of partition. It is necessary to accept it in all its breadth and integrity, well persuaded that everything that is granted to passion makes it more demanding because by nature it is insatiable.

3”° Prayer. Prayer must be added to the flight from temptation by means of one of the forms indicated above and to total resistance. To pray during temptation is already to place oneself in opposition to it, it is a way of protesting against the evil that seduces the senses, it is a reaction of

the higher part of the being against carnal temptations and it is to attract through it the grace of God, which assures victory. In general, short prayers (ardent and brief ejaculatory prayers addressed to God Our Lord, to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to the Blessed Virgin) are the best in such circumstances. After the temptation, one should carefully avoid thinking of it again under any pretext; it would be to expose oneself to its reappearance with more vigor. But if it is a question of violent and persistent temptations, they can be declared to the priest in the ordinary confession; this act of humility will often be rewarded with great peace and tranquility of spirit.

7. An admirable exposition of the principal means for preserving intact the treasure of perfect chastity, or for recovering it if it has been lost through sin, is that of the immortal pontiff Pius XU in his magnificent encyclical Sacra virginitas of March 25, 1954. The means that the divine Redeemer recommended to us for the effective safeguarding of our virtue are assiduous vigilance, to do diligently all that is in our power, and constant prayer to ask God for what, because of our weakness, we cannot attain: “Watch and pray so that you may not fall into temptation. The spirit is ready, but the flesh is weak” (Mt 26:41). 1.

Surveillance and mortification

This vigilance is absolutely necessary at all times and in all circumstances of our life: “For the flesh has contrary tendencies to the spirit, and the spirit has contrary tendencies to the flesh” (Gal 5:57), and if anyone is indulgent, even in the least things, with the seductions of the body, he will easily be drawn into those “works of the flesh” that the Apostle lists, which are the most gross and repugnant vices of men (cf. Gal 5:19-21). For this reason it is necessary first of all to watch over the movements of the

passions and the senses, to restrain them by a voluntarily austere life and by bodily penances, in order to submit them to right reason and to the law of God. “Those who belong to Christ have their flesh crucified with vices and passions” (Gal 5:24). The same Apostle of the Gentiles confesses of himself: “I punish my body and enslave it, lest, in preaching to those who are of Christ, I preach to those who are of the Body of Christ” (Gal 5:24).

I will be reprobated” (I Cor 9:27). All the saints kept a close watch over the movements of their senses and their passions, and at times restrained them violently, according to the words of the Divine Master: “I tell you more: whoever looks at a woman with evil desire for her has already committed adultery in his heart. If your right eye is an occasion for you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you, for it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be cast into hell” (Mt 5:28-29). With this warning, as is clear, our Redeemer asks first of all that we never consent to sin, not even mentally, and that we keep away from us with energy everything that can tarnish, even slightly, this most beautiful virtue. In this matter every diligence is too little, no severity is excessive. If weak health or other causes do not allow someone to carry out great bodily austerities, they in no way dispense him from vigilance and internal mortification. a) To flee from danger. On this point, it is also good to remember what the Holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church teach: that we can more easily overcome the allurements of sin and the seductions of passion by fleeing from them with all our might2 than by fighting them head on. To defend chastity, according to the expression of St. Jerome, flight is preferable to battle in the

open field: “I flee so as not to be defeated. This flight consists in diligently avoiding the occasion of sinning, and principally in elevating our mind and soul to divine things during temptations, fixing our eyes on the One to whom we have consecrated our virginity. “Contemplate the beauty of your loving Spouse,” St. Augustine advises us. b) Grave error: “to face the risk.” This flight and this continual vigilance to keep away from us the occasions of sinning have always been considered by the saints as the best means to fight in this matter; today, however, not everyone accepts this doctrine. Some think that all Christians, and especially sacred ministers, should not be “segregated from the world,” as in former times, but that they should be “present in the world,” and, therefore, have to “face the risk” and put their chastity to the test, so that it may be shown whether or not they are capable of resisting. Let all the young clerics see this, so that they may become accustomed to contemplate everything with a serene spirit and become immune to every kind of disturbance. They easily allow them to look without embarrassment at everything that is offered to their eyes, to frequent cinematographic spectacles, even those forbidden by ecclesiastical censorship; to leaf through any magazines, even obscene ones, and to read novels forbidden by the same natural law. And this they allow it under the pretext that today there are many who satiate themselves with such spectacles and readings, and it is necessary to understand their way of thinking and feeling in order to help them. It is easy to see how false and disastrous this way of educating the clergy and preparing them to achieve the holiness proper to their mission is. “He who loves danger will perish in it” (Eccl 3:27), and St. Augustine’s advice comes here very timely: “Do not tell me that you have a pure soul if you have impure eyes, because an impure eye is the messenger of an impure heart”. Undoubtedly, this disastrous method is based on a grave confusion. For Jesus Christ our Lord affirmed, yes, of

his apostles: “I have sent them into the world” (lo r 7, r 8), but before that he had said of them himself: “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (lo 17:16), and to his divine Father he had prayed with these words: “I do not ask you to take them out of the world, but to preserve them from the evil” (lo 17, r 5). The Church, which is based on such principles, has given wise and opportune norms to keep religious life away from priests,

dangerous attractions that can easily influence those who find themselves in the midst of the world, and by means of them he tries to place the sanctity of the priestly life away from the cares and amusements proper to the laity. c) Formation of the young clergy. It is all the more fitting to remove the young clergy from the worldly tumult in order to form them in the spiritual life and prepare them to attain priestly or religious perfection before they enter the combat. Let him be kept in seminaries or studentates for a long period of time, and let him receive a diligent formation; little by little and with prudence let him be initiated into the problems of our time, according to the norms that We have prescribed in the apostolic exhortation Mentí nostrae. What gardener will ever expose to the storms a plant of value, but still tender, to prove a robustness that it does not yet possess? Seminarians and young religious should be treated as tender and delicate plants that still need to be protected and gradually prepared for endurance and struggle. 2,

Christian modesty

The educators of clerical youth would do a better and more useful work by inculcating in the souls of young people the

principles of Christian modesty, which helps so much to preserve virginity unscathed and which can well be called the prudence of chastity. Modesty foresees the danger, prevents to put oneself in it and makes to avoid the occasions to which some less prudent ones expose themselves. It avoids suspicious familiarity with persons of the other sex, instilling in the mind a due reverence for the body, which is a member of Christ (cf. I Cor 6:15) and a temple of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 6:19). He who possesses Christian modesty has a horror of any sin of impurity and withdraws as soon as he feels the seduction awakening. Moreover, modesty suggests and supplies parents and educators with expressions suitable for instructing the consciences of young people in chastity. “Therefore, as we warned not long ago in an address, such modesty is not to be understood in such a way that it is equivalent to absolute silence to the point of excluding in moral formation even the reserved and prudent way of speaking”. However, in our times, some teachers and educators* more often than necessary, have believed it to be their job to initiate innocent children in the secrets of procreation in a way that offends their modesty. In this matter it is convenient to use the just measure and moderation that Christian modesty demands. Modesty is nourished by the fear of God, that filial fear based on a profound Christian humility, which makes us flee with the utmost diligence from all sin. Our predecessor St. Clement I already affirmed it with these words: “He who is chaste in the body should not boast, for it is another who gives him the gift of continence”. How important Christian humility is for the preservation of virginity, no one has expressed more clearly than St. Augustine: “Since perpetual continence, and above all virginity, is a most excellent gift in the saints of God, it must be carefully guarded against being corrupted by pride…. Therefore, the greater this gift seems to me, the more I fear that it will not disappear in the future because of pride. God alone is the true custodian of virginal

grace, which he alone bestowed, and “God is charity” (1Lo 4:8). The guardian, therefore, of virginity is charity, and the dwelling place of this guardian is humility”.

C.5. Chastity 3*.

323

Prayer to God

Let us not lose sight of the fact that perfect chastity is a gift of God. In this regard, St. Jerome profoundly warns: “It was given” to those who asked for it, to those who desired it, to those who labored to receive it. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened” (Mt 7:8). On prayer, adds St. Ambrose, depends the constant fidelity of the virgins to the divine Spouse. And St. Alphonsus Liguori, with that most ardent piety which distinguished him, teaches that there is no means so necessary to overcome temptations against this beautiful virtue of chastity as immediate recourse to God through prayer. 4.

Penance and Eucharist

To prayer, however, must be added the sacrament of penance, which, if received frequently and prepared, is a spiritual medicine that purifies and heals; and Eucharistic food, which, in the words of our predecessor of immortal memory, Leo XIII, is the best “remedy against sensuality. The purer and more chaste the soul is, the more it will hunger for this bread, from which it draws the strength to resist all the seductions of impure sin and with which it unites itself more closely to the divine Spouse: “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood dwells in me, and I in him” (Io 6:57),

5*

Devotion to the Virgin

An excellent means for preserving intact and sustaining perfect chastity, a means continually proven by the experience of the centuries, is that of a solid and ardent devotion to the Virgin Mother of God. In a certain way, this devotion contains in itself all the other means, for whoever sincerely and deeply lives it, must feel impelled to watch, to pray, to approach the tribunal of penance and the Eucharistic banquet. We therefore exhort with paternal affection all priests, religious and consecrated virgins to place themselves under the special protection of the holy Mother of God, who is the Virgin of virgins and “teacher of virginity,” as St. Ambrose affirms, and is the most powerful Mother of those, above all, who have dedicated themselves to divine service. Through her, says St. Athanasius, virginity began to exist, and St. Augustine teaches it clearly with these words: “The virginal dignity began with the Mother of God”. Following in the footsteps of the same St. Athanasius, St. Ambrose proposes to the virgins the life of the Virgin Mary as a model: “Imitate her, daughters…. Let the life of Mary serve you as a model of virginity, like an image that has been transferred to a canvas; in her, as in a mirror, shines the beauty of chastity and the beauty of every virtue. From here you can take examples of life, since in her, as in a paragon, it is shown, with the manifest teachings of her sanctity, what you must correct, what you must reform, what you must retain…. Here is the image of true virginity. This was Mary, whose life became the norm for all the virgins…. Let the Blessed Virgin Mary, then, be the teacher of our way of proceeding”. “So great was her grace, that she not only preserved virginity in herself, but bestowed this illustrious gift on those whom she visited.” How true, then, is the saying of St. Ambrose himself, “[O riches of Mary’s virginity!” In view of such riches it profits consecrated virgins, religious and priests today also greatly to

contemplate Mary's virginity in order to observe with greater fidelity and perfection the chastity of their own state.

But do not be content, dear children, with meditating on the virtues of the Blessed Virgin Mary; turn to her with absolute trust, following the advice of St. Bernard: "Let us seek grace, and let us seek it through Mary". And in a special way place in her the care of your spiritual life and perfection, imitating the example of St. Jerome, who said: "For me virginity is a consecration in Mary and in Christ".

Chapter 6

LA

OBEDIENCE

The most important of the three vows that constitute the very essence of the religious state is undoubtedly that of obedience. By it the religious offers to God the perfect, total and absolute holocaust of his own will in view of the full perfection of charity, to which all the evangelical counsels and other instruments and means of sanctification are essentially ordered. Given the breadth of the subject matter and in order to proceed as clearly as possible, we will divide this chapter into three articles; 1.

2. ° 3.0

Obedience in general. Religious obedience. Practice of religious obedience.

Article i

OBEDIENCE IN GENERAL

We will briefly explain the nature, natural foundation, excellence and limits of obedience. 1. 206,

Nature of obedience

Generally speaking, obedience is a virtue.

The virtue of justice is intimately related to and dependent on the cardinal virtue of justice through the virtue of

observance. 7

Justice, in fact, has for its proper object to give to each one what is due to him. It is evident that the inferior owes to the superior a special worship, which will be very different according to the nature of the superior to whom it refers. And so: a) The worship due to God constitutes the virtue of religion, which, for that very reason, is a potential part (derived virtue) of justice. b) The worship due to parents and country constitutes the virtue of piety, in the form proportionately due to each of them. c) The worship due to any person constituted in any.

dignity, constitutes the proper object of observance. If that person is the superior himself, the worship to him directed by the subject or inferior constitutes the virtue of obedience.

It is useful to insist a little on the intimate nature of the virtue of observance in order to specify with greater precision the integral concept of obedience. a)

The virtue of observance

207. Observance, as a special virtue derived from justice, can be defined with the Angelic Doctor as follows: that virtue

by which we offer worship and honor to persons constituted in dignity l *. Any person constituted in any true dignity is deserving, by that very fact, of our respect and veneration. And so, the servant must respect his lord, the soldier his captain, the subject his superior, the young man his elder, the disciple his master. This habitual, respectful and submissive attitude towards those who surpass us in some excellence or dignity, comes fully from the virtue of

observance. St. Thomas warns that to persons constituted in dignity we owe honor and worship, Honor, by reason of their excellence; and worship, obedience or service, by reason of the office of government that they hold over us 2. The first (from the Greek. SouAeía = servitude) is in charge of paying the honor and reverence that the servant owes to his master 3. The second regulates the relations of the subject with his superior, and is the one that we will study at length throughout this chapter.

b)

The virtue of obedience

208, According to St. Thomas, obedience is a moral virtue that makes the will ready to execute the precepts of the superior4. By precept is understood not only the rigorous command that obliges to serious fault, but also the simple will of the superior manifested outwardly, expressly or tacitly. And obedience will be all the more perfect the more quickly the superior's understood will is carried out, even before his express command 5. Obedience is proper and exclusive to rational beings, since it always supposes the exercise of intelligence and freedom. Obedience is not given in the automobile, which is driven by the motor; nor in the animal, which is guided by the motor, by its own will, by the will of the superior, even before his express command. 1 Cf. 2-2,102,20 et ad 3. 3 Cf. 2-2,103.

4 Cf, 2-2,104,2 ad 3. 5 Cf, 2-2,104,2,

only by instinct. When he obeys, man acts rationally; he obeys because he knows that the one who commands has

the right to command and that he has the obligation to obey. Let us now specify what is the natural basis of the obedience that every inferior owes to his superior.

2.

Natural basis of obedience

St. Thomas explains the natural foundation of obedience in the following reasoning, which is both profound and simple: “Just as the actions of natural agents proceed from natural powers, so human operations proceed from the human will. But it is a natural law that superior beings move inferior beings, because of the more excellent natural virtue conferred upon them by God$, Whence it is also necessary in men that the superior move the inferior by their will, in virtue of the authority received from God. Now to move by reason and will is to command. Consequently, just as in the same natural order, according to the divine plan, it is necessary that the inferior submit to the action of the superior, so also among men, according to the order of natural and divine law, the inferior must obey the superior”.

The natural and ultimate foundation of obedience is, therefore, the authority of the superior received directly or indirectly from God. In reality there is only one superior in the universe, who is God himself; but since it is impossible for him to manifest his will directly to each man and in each particular case, he has established that some men rule and govern others, conferring on the former the necessary power to do so. Therefore, all legitimate authority comes from God (Rom 13:1) and no one could legitimately exercise power if it had not been given to him from above (cf. lo 19:11). Let us listen to a contemporary author explaining this doctrine with precision:7 “It is of great importance to know exactly what it is that justifies in man the obligation to obey legitimate

authority, or, in other words, what is the foundation of obedience. This foundation is the supreme dominion of God and the absolute submission that the creature owes him. That God has the right to command us and that we have the duty to obey him is evident. What is important to understand clearly is that God has on earth legitimate representatives and that it is therefore necessary to obey them as Himself. It is evident that the social state is the natural state of man. Outside of society he can neither preserve himself nor develop in conformity with his nature; therefore society has its origin in God (who is the Author of the social state).

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Cf. 2-2,104,1. Cf. Brief Treatise on the Religious State

0.257.

of human nature). Now then: no society, however limited it may be, can live without an authority that coordinates the efforts of its members towards the common good. Consequently. God wills, if there is no contradiction in Him, that society be hierarchical, with superiors in charge of commanding inferiors who must obey. The legitimate superiors are, therefore, representatives of God. From Him they have received the superiority they hold. St. Paul affirms this when he says: “There is no authority except from God; therefore, whoever disobeys the authorities disobeys the ordinance of God” (Rom 13:1-2). And the Christian tradition has constantly applied to every legitimate authority the words that Jesus Christ our Lord said to the seventy-two disciples: “He who listens to you listens to me, and he who

despises you despises me” (Le 10:16). It should be noted that this principle retains its full force even when the authority lies with unworthy men, as is shown by these words of the divine Master: “The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat, so practice and do whatever they tell you, but do not conform your conduct to theirs” (Mt 23:2-3). It is therefore beyond doubt for the Christian that in every legitimate authority, no matter how reprehensible the person who holds it may be, the authority of God resides. Therefore, superiors have the duty to command as God’s lieutenants in order to promote the general good, and they incur guilt if they do so for other ends; but inferiors, in their turn, have the obligation to obey them as God himself. The reason for this submission is easily understood: without obedience, there would be disorder and anarchy in the different human societies”.

The authority of the superior received from God himself and manifested to the subject expressly or tacitly is, then, the natural foundation of obedience. It is worth asking whether there is also true obedience, in the strict and rigorous sense of the word, when the subject goes ahead of the superior’s precept which has not yet been manifested even tacitly. We make our own the following observations of a contemporary theologian: “Whoever anticipates the express precept of the superior because he is aware of the tacit precept, is evidently making an act of obedience. It is worth asking whether, as some have claimed, he who anticipates the tacit precept also performs it. In other words, he who knows that the superior wants something and before he commands it, does he really perform an act of obedience, and a more perfect act of obedience than if he waited for it to be imposed on him? I think we must answer that such execution is often an indication of very great obedience and even a more perfect act than that of obedience, but that it is not an act of obedience. An indication of very great

obedience, because he who does what the superior wants and does not command, shows himself ready and willing to obey if he were commanded to do so. A more perfect act than that of obedience; for, as we shall see in article 3, obedience is not the greatest of virtues, and the subject can be moved to satisfy a simple desire of the superior by motives peculiar to more excellent virtues: sometimes the charity that we owe to our neighbors or to the superior makes us

8 Cf. Fr. Lumbreras, O. P., commentaries on the Summa Theologica, bilingual ed. BAC vol.9 {Madrid 1955) p.645-646.

It urges us to anticipate the precept in order to avoid scandal, to strengthen peace and even to make the superior's cross more tolerable. But it is not an act of obedience, because the formal object of obedience is the precept of the superior, and the superior, who perhaps would like to command, who perhaps is ready to command, has not yet commanded".

3.

Excellence of obedience

210, St. Thomas expressly asks in the Summa Theologica whether obedience is the greatest of the virtues. He naturally answers that it is not, since the theological virtues unite us directly with God and are, therefore, more perfect than obedience, which is a moral virtue; but among the latter it occupies the first place by reason of the earthly goods it sacrifices. Here is the reasoning of the Angelic

Doctor 9: “Just as sin consists in preferring earthly goods with contempt for divine goods, so, on the contrary, the merit of the virtuous act consists in union with God with contempt for created goods. Now then: the end is superior to the means that lead to it. Therefore, if created goods are despised in order to attain a greater union with God, the merit of virtue is greater for union with God than for the contempt of earthly goods. And so, the theological virtues, which unite us by themselves to God, are more excellent than the moral virtues, which make us despise creatures in order to unite ourselves to God. But there are three kinds of earthly goods that man can despise for the sake of God: the least goods, which are external to man; the mean goods, which are those pertaining to the human body; and the supreme goods, which are those pertaining to the soul, among which the will stands out, because through it man uses and enjoys all other goods. Thus obedience is, in itself, the noblest virtue among the moral virtues, because it despises for God one’s own will, while the others despise for God some other goods inferior to one’s own will. For this reason, St. Gregory says that “obedience rightly takes precedence over victims, because for victims one sacrifices the flesh of others, but for obedience one immolates one’s own will”. It also follows from this that the acts of the other virtues are meritorious before God insofar as they obey his divine will. For, in fact, if one were to suffer martyrdom or distribute all one’s goods among the poor, this would not be meritorious if one were not ordered to fulfill the divine will, which is the essence of obedience. Nor would it be meritorious if one did these works without charity, which is inseparable from obedience, as St. John teaches: “He who says he knows God and does not keep his commandments, lies. But he who keeps his word, in him charity is truly perfect”. And this is so because friendship produces “the same willing and not willing”. 9 Cf. 2-2,104,3 Excluding Ja religion, which, having as its object the worship due to God,

is the moral virtue that most resembles and comes closest to the theological virtues and is, therefore, the first and most excellent of all the moral virtues, as St. Thomas himself explains (cf. 2-2,81,6). Obedience is the first by reason of the earthly goods it sacrifices, but not by reason of its pro

Limits of obedience

211. St. Thomas devotes three articles to specifying how far the obedience of the subject should go in relation to his superior. Here are the conclusions he reaches: 1. a If the one who commands is God himself, our obedience can have no limits, since God, being the prime mover of natural things and of human wills, is lord and master of all creatures and is incapable of abusing any of them n. 2. a If the one who commands is a man, obedience has its limits, because man is a second mover and never universal, but limited to a determined number of affairs and persons. We must obey him if he is our superior and remains within the limits of his competence, without contradicting the orders of a greater superior and without meddling in matters outside his forum.1 2. 3. a Secular authorities are to be obeyed within the limits of their competence, even if they do not belong to the guild of the Church. For grace does not destroy nature, and faith in Christ does not destroy the order of justice, but rather confirms it. For the same reason, man must obey the secular power insofar as the order of justice demands it. But subjects can and must disobey when the power is illegitimate or commands unjust things, except in certain cases to avoid scandal or some greater evil I3.

Article 2

RELIGIOUS OBEDIENCE

After the brief notions we have just given on obedience in general, we will study more broadly religious obedience, that is, the obedience proper to those who have consecrated themselves to God in a religious institute. I.

Obedience, an essential element of religious life

212. As we have seen in its corresponding place, the religious life is essentially constituted by the three vows of pious object, which corresponds to religion. From two points of view, the primacy among the moral virtues belongs to justice-especially legal justice-and to humility (cf. 2-2,1 6j,5)” 11 Cf. 2-2,4.4’ 12 Cf. 2-2,304.513 Cf. 2-2,304,6.

P ili, Ascetical and mystical aspect of religious life

poverty, chastity and obedience. The Angelic Doctor reasons the necessity of obedience in the religious state in the following way: “We have repeated that the religious state is an apprenticeship or exercise to attain perfection. But everyone who is instructed and exercised to attain an end needs to follow the direction of another who teaches and exercises him in the way to that end, just as a disciple follows the direction pointed out to him by his master. Therefore, it is necessary for religious to submit to the direction and command of another in everything that concerns the religious life. That is why it is said in the Decretals: “The life of the monks means submission and the condition of a disciple”. Now, man submits himself to the orders and direction of another by obedience. Therefore, obedience is an essential element of the perfection of religious life”.

In answering the objection that all men are obliged to obey their superiors and, therefore, it does not seem that obedience belongs especially to the religious state, St. Thomas specifies the fundamental difference between the obedience of the laity and that of religious. Here are his own words: “To obey one’s superiors in what virtue demands (e.g., in order not to incur mortal sin) is not a work of supererogation, but is obligatory, and for this reason it is imposed on everyone. What is proper to the religious is to obey in that which refers to attaining perfection. Compared with the former, this obedience is like the universal compared with the particular, for those who live in the world give themselves to God in part, reserving the rest for themselves, and obey their superiors only in that part which they consecrate to God. But those who live in the religious state consecrate themselves totally in person and goods to God, as has been proved. Consequently, their obedience is universal!” (ad z).

Commenting on this greater excellence and universality of religious obedience over simple human obedience or that of the lay Christian, a modern author rightly writes: “Religious obedience embraces, in the first place, all the obligations of man and of the Christian: we are not truly religious if we are not first of all honest men, honest Christians and good citizens. The religious submits himself to Jesus Christ in the person of the Church and to the legitimate depositaries of authority, as do the simple faithful, but he does not stop there. The obedience of the Christian, although it imposes duties, leaves intact the free disposition of the goods he possesses, of his time and activity, and is limited to the precepts of the Decalogue and the commandments of the Church, together with the duties of his own state. The religious, for the love of God, in order to give him greater glory and to imitate the divine Savior better, seeks a more costly obedience than that which he asks of the simple

faithful. He extends his practice to the smallest details of life and gives to the Lord, together with his person, that which is most dear and precious to him: his freedom, so great a good, which God, the absolute master of life and death, always respects. 14 2-2,186,5. 15 Cf. A Brief Treatise on the Religious State, n. 266.

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Religious obedience constitutes, therefore, a very great sacrifice, but one that is pleasing to God in the highest degree, since it is the supreme gift of love to surrender not only what one possesses - a very small thing - but also what one is".

2. Basis of religious obedience

213* The foundation from which the religious as such derives his obligation to obey is the vow of obedience, by which he has bound himself before God to obey his superiors according to the rule and constitutions of his own religious institute. In virtue of this foundation, all acts of obedience practiced by the religious are influenced by the virtue of religion .and have the merit of religion. "jIn virtue of the vow," writes St. Thomas, "the religious are obliged to observe all those things which the rule prescribes as precepts and all those which the superior wishes to prescribe in accordance with the rule."

The reason is that the religious, by the vow of obedience, binds himself to all the things he promises to fulfill at

profession. These things are prescribed in the rules and in the express commands of the superiors, which are-in the profound phrase of the Angelicus-“an animated rule.” To all of them extends the influence of the vow of obedience, which constitutes the only title that obliges him to obey as a religious, since by it he has promised God to fulfill all the verbal or written prescriptions of his institute. To refuse to obey any of them is to break religious obedience, to fail in the commitment contracted with God in virtue of vow 17. By virtue of his vow of obedience-an act of religion directed immediately to God-the religious obeys God himself in the person of the superior. Therefore, his obedience is-must be-strictly supernatural and cannot rest on any human foundation (e.g., on the natural endowments of the superior: talent, discretion, sympathy, etc.) without, by the same fact, being denaturalized in any way. Either the religious obeys for this supernatural motive-the superior representing God-or his obedience has ceased to be formally religious to become a mere material, natural, purely human obedience. Insisting on this supernatural aspect of religious obedience, Colin rightly writes 18:

1(5 Quodl. 1 q.Q a.20. 17 Cf. Urdákoz, Teología de la obediencia religiosa, in Actas del Coixgreso tiacíonai de perfección y apostolado vol.3 (Madrid 1958) p. 197-198. 18 The Cite of the Vows c.18 p.402‘403.

“By his office, the superior is the authentic representative of God and his official delegate. We must believe,” says St. Benedict, “that the superior fulfills in the monastery the very functions of Christ” This truth of faith-creditur-is the only one that can assure obedience an immutable solidity,

and, when it is forgotten, one falls fetally into automatism or slavery. God is present in every creature by his essence, his immensity and his power, he is also present in some men by his sovereignty. God is in every superior, and if faith reveals to me Jesus Christ hidden under the consecrated species, it must also make me discover him under the human appearances of authority. When the superior speaks, commands, forbids, he does so only in the name of God, of whom he is the mandatary and “vicar. “20 The Lord is the one who speaks, commands, forbids through his mouth, and his orders are not, as one might think, the expression of his will, and even less of his whims, but the faithful transmission of the divine will: “He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me” (Le 10:16), me, Jesus Christ.

The problem of religious obedience is reduced, in reality, to a problem of faith. The words of the Gospel that we have just quoted contain and summarize the whole theology of obedience. They express its traditional concept, the only one that is valid, especially now that so many are determined to judge all things with a naturalistic and human spirit. To see God in the superior is the fundamental principle of religious obedience, which cannot be lost sight of for a single instant, on pain of denaturing it and destroying it at its very root. In it is found the solution to all the difficulties that obedience can pose. Ultimately, they are all resolved on the basis of the spirit of faith, since religious obedience must have a strictly supernatural character, otherwise it would become a purely human obedience, if not a sickly weakness or a repugnant hypocrisy. “The formal motive of our submission must be the firm conviction that the legitimate superior represents God and commands in his name. He who obeys only because what is commanded seems reasonable and prudent, according to his particular judgment, would lose the merit proper to obedience, just as he would lose the merit of faith who accepts only the revealed truths that are

evident because of their evidence. The formal motive of faith is the authority of God, who reveals to us his mysteries, which remain obscure” 21.

3.

Excellence of religious obedience

214. Religious obedience, sanctioned by the vow, constitutes the most excellent and meritorious of the evangelical counsels. Here is the splendid reasoning of St. Thomas 22:

Rule of St. Benedict c.2. 20 St. Bernard, De praecepto c.g. 21 A Brief Treatise on the Religious State n.267. 22 2-2,186,8.

“First, because by the vow of obedience man offers to God a more excellent good, namely, his own will, the value of which surpasses that of the body and that of external things, which are offered by the vows of chastity and poverty. Therefore, what is done out of obedience is more pleasing to God than what is done out of one’s own will. St. Jerome says: “My words are intended to teach you not to abandon yourself to your own will”. And then he adds: “Do not do your own will; eat what you are commanded, be content with what you are given, see what you are offered”. Even fasting is not pleasing to God when it is done according to one’s own will, for Isaiah says: “Behold, in the days of fasting you do your own will” (Is 58:3)* Second, because the vow of obedience contains the other two and not the other way around. For obedience itself obliges the religious to fulfill the other two vows of poverty and chastity and many other things besides those two vows. Third, because the vow of

obedience refers properly to the acts most related to the end of religious life. Now, the excellence of a thing is measured by its proximity to the end. Therefore, the vow of obedience is the most essential vow of the religious state, for no one will be a religious if she does not have the vow of obedience, even if she has taken the vows of poverty and chastity.

In another place, answering the objection that good works that are done on one's own initiative seem more meritorious and excellent than those that are executed out of obedience or necessity of precept, the Angelic Doctor writes;. "The necessity that comes from coercion makes the act involuntary and excludes the reason of praiseworthy and meritorious. But the necessity that is born of obedience is not of coercion, but completely free, inasmuch as man freely wants to obey, even if sometimes he does not want precisely that which is commanded considered in itself (e.g., because it is painful or unpleasant to him). Therefore, since man submits himself for the love of God, through the vow of obedience, to the necessity of doing things which in themselves are not pleasing to him, everything he does is more pleasing to God, even if it is less excellent. And the fact is that nothing better can man offer to God than the submission of his own will to another for the love of God. "2^.

Speaking of the excellence of religious obedience, Valuy 24 rightly writes: "Whichever way you look at this virtue..., it is very easy to discover its merit and its value. a) In the gift it makes to God. It is no longer the fortune of the earth, like poverty; nor bodily satisfactions, like chastity; but it consecrates to God that which is most noble, most precious and most intimate to man: his very freedom. Certainly it is easier to part with his treasure than with his heart, to chain the gross senses rather than the understanding, to immolate an animal rather than the will. 23 2-2,186,5 ad 5. £1

parenthesis is ours. 24 Cf. The Virtues of the Religious (Barcelona 1Q31) p.140142.

b) In the traits of similarity that make us have with Jesus Christ. As that most perfect Obedient One, the religious can say: “I do not seek my own will, but the will of Him who sent me” (Io 5:30). “According to the commandment given me by my Father, so I do” (Io 14:31). “I have a food to eat that you do not know..... My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to fulfill his commands” (Io 4,32-34). c) In the dignity and perfection that he communicates to THE WILL. Is not the will of God the holiest and wisest of wills? is not the understanding of God that which reveals the most light and righteousness? For by the vow of obedience the religious unites his understanding and his will to the understanding and the will of God; he becomes one spirit with God and can rightly boast of thinking and willing as God does, of doing what God wills, how he wills it and because he wills it.

d) In the influence it exerts on all the virtues. According to the saints, obedience is the origin, mother, nourisher and guardian of all the other virtues. She plants them, waters them and makes them bear fruit; she preserves them, sustains them, compends them and supplies them; she gives them form and merit, price and life. There are religious orders where only the vow of obedience is made, as one who says: obey and that is enough. e) In THE PREDESTINATION PREDESTINATION WHICH IS IN IT. Sin being nothing other than disobedience to the divine law, he who consecrates his life to obedience places himself in a certain impossibility of sinning; and since the only obstacle to salvation is in sin, he takes the surest, the shortest and the easiest way to

salvation. What an abundance of graces during life, what consolations at the hour of death, what glory and what happiness does God not grant in eternity to the religious who for his love has sacrificed everything, and has sacrificed himself! “Yes,” says St. John Climacus, “the truly obedient will see death coming without being frightened, he will receive it as a dream, or rather as life, certain that it is not he, but the superior who will answer to the sovereign Judge. I seem to see him on his deathbed with the crucifix in one hand and the book of rules in the other: “I too, Lord, have been crucified with you, like you and for you. My feet, my hands, my tongue, all my senses, my intelligence, my freedom, my will, my whole being has been crucified, has lost its freedom. Obedience has been my nails and my cross. And now, Lord, since I have followed you to Calvary, command me to enter with you into glory”.

4.

Advantages of obedience

215* Great are the advantages of obedience, both for the intelligence as well as for the will and the heart 25: i. °.

a) b) c) love

For intelligence:

Certainty of knowing and doing infallibly the divine will. Certainty of divine help: “I will be with you” (Ex 3:12). Certainty of supernatural success: “All things work together for the good of those whom God wills” (Rom 8:28). Even if the superior is wrong.

Cf. Colín, o.c. c.22.

C.6. Obedience 2.°.

335

For the will:

a) It is the source of true freedom. Nothing enslaves so much as attachment to one’s own will. b) It is the source of strength. To obey to the point of heroism it is necessary to be very courageous. c) It is a guarantee of perseverance in doing good. 3.0

For the heart:

a) It is a source of individual and collective peace. What peace of heart, what profound peace in a house or monastery of the obedient! b) It is the principle of order. Each one in his place; the superior, commanding; the subject, obeying. Result: peace, that is, “the tranquility of order”. c) It exempts the subject from responsibility or scruples: “I obeyed”, the only account he will have to give to God,

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The vow of obedience

216. The vow of obedience that the religious makes consists in the promise made to God to obey his legitimate superiors in everything that he commands according to the rule and constitutions. The vow is made to God, not to men; and one promises to God to obey his legitimate superiors-who represent him on earth-in all that they command according to their own rule and constitutions. Therefore, before studying the matter and obligations of the vow of obedience, it is necessary to treat of the power of the superiors in relation to the subjects. a)

Double power of superiors

217* In order to better understand the true scope of the obligations imposed on religious by the vow of obedience, it is useful to specify the twofold power that superiors enjoy in relation to their subjects: i. Domestic power. Every religious superior can, by natural right, command his inferiors, because this is required by the good natural order of things. This power is proper to everyone who is the head of a regularly constituted human society, beginning with the fathers of a family, and for this reason it is designated by the names of patria potestas, domestic power, and social power.

In religious institutes this power resides in every superior, even subalterns, and also in simple religious who, at the head of others, are entrusted with any office or work; and in each case it confers the

Cf. Brief Treatise on the Religious State, n. 378, to avoid here the legislative, coercive, jurisdictional, *etc.* powers, which are not relevant here.

The power to command within the limits of his authority and to give orders for the exact observance of religious discipline. To this power, emanating from natural law, corresponds in the inferior the duty to obey, imposed by the virtue of obedience. And since this exists independently of the vow of obedience, the novices are also subject to this domestic power of the superiors.

The second power that1 superiors possess, more special and sacred and much more important (it includes in itself the domestic power and surpasses it), is born of the vow of obedience, that is, of the contract by which the religious places himself before God in the hands of his superiors and

subjects his own will to them in all that is stipulated by the rules and constitutions. By virtue of this power-called dominative power, power of religion, sacred power-the religious who issues this vow commits himself to obey the superior by a new title, that of the virtue of religion, and this obligation will be strict and grave if the superior commands by virtue of the vow of obedience. The domestic power did not affect the person or will of the subject, but only the matter of the vow of obedience, which is under the dominion of the superiors. The dominative power, on the other hand, affects the very person and the very will of the religious subject, so that, without the will of the superior, he cannot bind himself firmly to any kind of obligations outside his vow. b)

Legitimate superiors

218. The Roman Pontiff, who is the head and superior general of all religious orders, congregations, and institutes, is the legitimate superior and therefore has the power to command by virtue of the vow of obedience (cf. n. 499). 2.0

The Sacred Congregation of Religious (cf. cn,2Si).

3.0 General and provincial chapters. Not the local one, unless, when the office of local superior becomes vacant, the rights of the former are returned to the chapter. 4o The general, provincial, and local superiors, within their respective powers; 5o The regular superior, with respect to the nuns of his own order who are subject to him and in those matters which, according to the Code, depend on him. 6º The local ordinary in congregations of diocesan right of which he is the first superior. The local ordinary is not to be the first superior in congregations of pontifical right, even if they are not exempt.

7.0 In some institutes, subordinate superiors (subprior, vice-rector, etc.), when this faculty is granted to them by the rule, by lawful usage, or by the principal superior himself, insofar as the constitutions permit. The confessors have no jurisdiction to command by virtue of the vow. The master of novices can command by virtue of the vow only a professed religious coming from another order who is making his novitiate in the new one.

Superiors are considered to command in virtue of the vow when they use formulas such as these: “In virtue of holy obedience”, “In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ”, “Under formal precept”, and other similar ones. Or when in the manner of commanding, in the gravity of what is commanded or in other special circumstances it is clearly evident that such is their desire. The religious who disobeys subordinate superiors who cannot command him by virtue of the vow, sins against religious obedience, but not against the vow.

6/ Matter of the vow of obedience 219* The matter of the vow of obedience is whatever is ordered by legitimate superiors according to the rule and constitutions of the institute itself. A distinction can be made between the remote and proximate matter of the vow of obedience.

Remote matter

The remote matter of the vow of obedience is everything that is contained in the rules and constitutions, whether explicit or implicit, as necessary or useful for their exact observance or good administration. The power of superiors, more or less broad according to their hierarchy, is always

limited by the rules. They are their interpreters and cannot go beyond what they are allowed to do. The inferior, for his part, is obliged to obey by vow whatever is in conformity with the rule and the constitutions; but not what is above or below, nor what is contrary to them. According to this, the superior cannot command anything that is: a) Above the rule, as would be, for example, the practice of some heroic act (e.g., to care for the sick who are sick with the plague), unless this act is foreseen by the constitutions that were accepted at the time of profession. 27 Cf. Tabera> The Right of Religious 11.279-280; Brief Treatise on the Religious State n.280; Vaujy, The Virtues of the Religious p.i 52-153.

The order to go on missions among infidels, to move to another nation, even in an unhealthy or dangerous climate, etc., are considered heroic acts.

b) Below the rule, such as things that are openly ridiculous, futile or useless. Some saints, inspired by God, have ordered some things of this kind in order to test their disciples, humble them and perfect them in virtue. But in these rare and exceptional things they are not to be imitated in normal circumstances. The inferior, however, should not easily take what he is commanded as useless, so as to excuse himself from obeying. It may only seem so, and, even if in reality it were so, considered in itself, in the mind of the superior it may be directed to a reasonable end. c) Contrary to the rule. And so, for example, if the institute has as its sole object the education of schoolgirls, the superior cannot entrust to her subjects the care of the sick in hospitals; if in the institute perfect enclosure or median enclosure is established, neither can the superior send her subjects to take care of the sick or

to distribute aid at home, *etc.* It is evident that the superior cannot command anything illicit, contrary to the law of God or of the Church, no matter how insignificant it may seem (e.g., to tell a small lie to “look good”). If such a thing were to happen, the inferior would be obliged not to obey (although humbly and without haughty attitude). Where one cannot command, there is no obligation to obey. In case of doubt about the lawfulness of what is commanded, the presumption is in favor of the superior and the subject can obey with a clear conscience as long as the unlawfulness of what is commanded is not proven to him. 2.0

Upcoming matter

The proximate matter of the vow of obedience is all that which the legitimate superior declares he wishes to impose on the inferior by virtue of the vow. That is to say: what constitutes remote matter of the vow becomes proximate by virtue of the superior’s precept. By virtue of this principle, every order that expresses the will to oblige by virtue of the vow, and only that, constitutes the proximate matter of the vow of obedience. The reason is that the rules and constitutions do not oblige by virtue of the vow, even those that oblige to sin and grave sin, unless it is expressly stated in them. The religious commits himself by vow to obey what the superior commands him according to the rules, not to fulfill each one of them. The vow subjects the religious to the ordination of the rule, supposing the precept28.

The orders of superiors not expressed in the form of a precept constitute the matter, not of the vow, but of the virtue 23 Cf. Tabera. o.c. n.2$o. This doctrine can be seen very clearly exposed in A. Peinador, El uoto y la virtud de la obediencia: Vida Religiosa 3 (1946) 7óss.

of obedience. Hence, the matter of the virtue of religious obedience is broader than that of the vow: it is everything that the superior can command even in the form of a simple desire, not of an express precept. Therefore, things that do not enter into the matter of the vow (e.g., because they are about the rule or outside the rule) can enter into that of the virtue. 7*

The vow and the virtue of obedience

1. The motive proper to the virtue of obedience is justice, of which it is a part (as we have seen) and which inclines the will to submit to legitimate superiors. The motive proper to the vow is the virtue of religion, which obliges one to render to God in the person of his representatives the obedience due to him; an obligation of a different order, the violation of which is of particular gravity. 2. °

The precise object of the vow is the orders formally imposed by virtue of obedience.

The object of virtue is made up not only of the just orders, desires, supplications and advice of superiors, but also of all the prescriptions of the rules and constitutions. 3.0 The extension of virtue is much broader than that of the vow. This always has a well determined matter, obligatory under sin, and the execution of the external act is enough to observe it. Virtue, on the other hand, extends even to what is merely of counsel and reaches to the same more or less perfect internal acts. Everything that the religious performs falls under its dominion, so that actions that are indifferent in themselves are sanctified by it, and even acts that are good in themselves would lose their merit if they were opposed to it. From this it follows: a) That every fault against

the vow is at the same time a fault against virtue, but not vice versa. b) That obeying materially by the fulfillment of what is ordered (thus saving the vow), one can formally disobey by the resistance of the will, lacking virtue. The vow is a means, virtue is the end that is pursued. c) That the merit of the vow is assured as long as one has the merit of virtue, since everything that is executed for the sake of obedience realizes the holocaust that the vow supposes.

Cf. Brief Treatise on the Religious State n.282.

d) That if one rarely sins mortally against the vow, perhaps it is rarer still that one sins mortally against virtue alone.

Let's specify a little more the question of the sin against the vow of obedience.

8.

Sin against the vow of obedience

221 Disobeying orders imposed in virtue of holy obedience, whether general or particular, is always a grave sin, if the matter is grave and if the other conditions required to constitute mortal sin are present: full warning and full consent. This transgression of the vow, because it is a transgression of the virtue of religion, has the character of sacrilege. In slight matters, the command, even if imposed by virtue of the vow, does not bind under grave sin, because the matter does not suffer from it. It should be noted, however, that apparently minor things can easily constitute grave matter by reason of special circumstances, the general good or the end that the superior proposes (e.g., if

he intends to avoid some grave scandal, or a notable disorder in the community, or to uproot abuses that can be aggravated if they are not corrected, etc.). In practice, it can and should be presumed that when the superior commands “in virtue of holy obedience”, he uses his power with prudence and that, concretely, what is commanded is important and a matter of grave sin. In virtue of these principles the following can be concluded *°: The religious sins mortally against the vow:

a) When he refuses to obey an order given in virtue of holy obedience. It matters little whether the order is general or particular (that is, for all the religious or for him alone), either orally or in writing, and whether it is given by the superior himself or by one of his delegates. b) When he answers the superior who commands him: I do not obey, I do not want to do itf or in any other way that could indicate rebellion or formal contempt for authority. c) When the disobedience would cause considerable spiritual or temporal harm to the religious, to the community, or to a third party. In general, in other cases of disobedience, it is a venial sin against the vow. For example, when the superior commands without involving the virtue of obedience.

Cf. Valuy, o.c. P.I54-ISS.

when the matter is light in itself, in the end and in the circumstances; when the refusal does not have as its principle contempt for authority, but a vice that is imagined to be seen in the person or in the order of the superior; and, in general, when it is not believed that disobedience destroys the formal reason for the vow, that is, the knot of

subordination. If it is a question of simple desires, with which the superior manifests his will without pretending to oblige the subjects, the refusal to conform to them is not in itself a sin against the vow, but the virtue of obedience can easily be broken, apart from the negligence, imprudence, lack of charity for oneself, etc., that may be involved in it. If it is a question of the breaking of rules or constitutions which expressly declare that they do not want to bind under sin-except those relative to the precepts of God or of the Church or those which determine the matter of the vows, etc.-their violation also does not imply any sin in theory; but in practice it is little less than impossible that there is not some sin of imprudence, negligence, disedification or scandal, *etc.* Let it not be forgotten, finally, that when these transgressions become very frequent and almost habitual, they engender contempt and completely destroy religious discipline. 9.

Current crisis of obedience

222. Let us listen to an astute theologian of our times in explaining the so-called "crisis of obedience" that characterizes today's world:31 "It is in the conviction and in the sight of all that, in the moral process of humanity, obedience is going through a bad moment. It is not obedience that defines the general attitude of man today, but freedom. Freedom in thinking, willing and doing. Today, authority is supported as little as possible. Its prescriptions are not fulfilled by the compliance that is due to it, but by evading the sanctions that support them. In civil society, with the obligatory profession of the dogma of freedom, goes together the increase of the police. And the full paradox occurs in the communist regime, where the augury of a future communist society without authority is guaranteed by the most despotic and enslaving of tyrannies. In free countries, the rulers, who should be the center of respect

and the key to social unity, are, on the contrary, the target of all criticism and the sign of all contradictions." "The concept of obedience, writes Carlos Santamaría, has perhaps never been so compromised as in today's world. "32 Cardinal Feltin commented on this gravity in the same Catholic camp, in a conference to the clergy of Paris 33: 31 Cf, M. Llamera, O. P., La crisis actual de la obediencia: Teología Espiritual vol.i (1957) n.3 P.41S-421. 32 Documents 17-18 (San Sebastian 1954) p.i. 33 Semame Relixieuse de Paris, Oct. 3, 1953, p.903.

"At the present time, no one recognizes any authority other than that which it is convenient for him to accept, either because the one who exercises it is sympathetic, or because his demands coincide with his own personal goals, but no one adheres easily to authority that comes from above, whoever it may be who possesses it, especially if his directives would be contrary to us. This disposition of mind could have unfortunate consequences in the social order, and it would not fail to have much more serious consequences in the religious order and, above all, in the priestly order. It is that which engenders this neo-Protestantism which the Holy Father fears so much: in which no other law than personal judgment is recognized, and which causes in certain souls such destruction as to alter the sense of faith". And no hierarchy, no matter how high and sacred, is unscathed. In the Catholic religious field, the literature that abounds and deprives the most is that of a critical and reformist sign34. To criticize our Catholicism is already a phenomenon of contagion. Everyone contributes his ink to beautify the face of the Church. A more or less reckless criticism, but universal, that discusses from Roman

centralism to the dimensions of the Toledo bell. The worst off are the hierarchs, who are blamed for all the real or supposed deficiencies of the Church. This critical posture relaxes the spirit of obedience and sometimes even its very effectiveness. We all remember recent cases of remiss and even rebellious behavior in the face of decisions of the supreme hierarchy. The supposed right, usually exercised, to discuss the competence of superiors and the reason for their orders, does not favor the duty of obedience. Nor does it favor the due concept and exercise of authority in superiors. There are those who compromise it by defect, infected or impressed by the environment, and there are those who compromise it by excess, pretending to vindicate it with an inconsiderate imposition. The difficult thing is to keep the just mean that saves, at the same time, the principle of authority and the utility of its exercise, It is very difficult to be a good superior with bad subjects. The crises of obedience easily derive in crises of authority. However, only by virtue of very good superiors would it be easy to restore good obedience. But we are not trying now to solve the crisis, but to ascertain its reality, which is already all too clear. What are the causes? The authors of certain countries tend to explain the current crisis of obedience as a spontaneous reaction against totalitarian regimes, oppressors of freedom. It would be an exacerbation of the spirit of independence in the face of modern systems of social slavery. It is an explanation of water through the faucet. But the true explanation of water is not the tap, but the aqueduct and, above all, the source. And the source of this crisis of obedience is naturalistic humanism, and the aqueduct or the ideological-social line that leads to us can be expressed in this ugly formula: humanism-rationalism-liberalism-democratism-totalitarianism-personalism. An order does not subsist when its principle fails. That is why the order of human life fails when it dissociates itself from God, who is its true principle. Theocentrism and

anthropocentrism define two trajectories with34 “One notes in fact also in their midst a lack of a sense of obedience, manicured by a hypercriticism that reaches the point of disrespect. The laity criticize the clergy, and the clergy criticize their ecclesiastical superiors, examining with a magnifying glass and without any consideration whatsoever their dispositions and uncovering without compassion their weaknesses. The motives are always the same: the instinct against any form of obedience, the overestimation of oneself and of one’s own judgment, accentuated today by distrust, which finds in criticism a channel for unhealthy venting1” {VVVulf, Current Crisis of Ecclesiastical Obedience: ColJigite 2 [i$5al 14O

The process of life and the history of man must be theocentric in order to be ordered. If man is God’s workmanship, if God is the cause of man and his destiny, the process of man’s life and history must be theocentric in order to be ordered. Dependence on God is not only an ontological law, but also a psychological and moral law of human life* Every anthropocentric orientation and tendency perverts the order of this life, by detaching it and making it independent of God. This is why we say that the crisis of obedience has its explanation in modern naturalistic humanism, which replaces the medieval theocentric anthropology, which explained man in dependence on God, with an anthropocentric anthropology, which values human reality in itself, dispensing with or rejecting any pretension of conditioning the human good to an origin or a destiny foreign to man himself. Humanism emancipates man from God, leaving him at the mercy of himself, that is, at the mercy of his own reason and freedom* Rationalism is the

first consequence of humanistic naturalism, and liberationism the second. Man must recognize no other magisterium than that of his reason, and no other law than that of his will. On the social plane, the liberal or democratic regime imposes itself as irreplaceable: the people must be governed by their own will. Ultimately, the sum of wills is the law of laws. There is no better reason or basis for obedience. One obeys because the law is the expression of one's own will, or because it is imposed by the will of others. The authority is the representative of this will, in charge of carrying it out. It has no other title of respect and compliance. As long as he provides the necessary material submission, every citizen is free to think, will, speak and act against the authority and the law. It is in his right to pretend and to try to subvert them, to replace them with others and even to eliminate them at all. The serious practical disadvantages of this social democratism are easily understood. In many nations they were so many that they provoked the extreme remedy of totalitarian or national-socialist regimes. There is no right or freedom in the face of the supreme right of the social and national common good. The democratic authority, expression of the unstable triumph and right of the wills in struggle, had to give way to the state and national authority, representatives of the supreme right of the common good. It was necessary to suppress liberties in order to save authority. The elimination of the European totalitarian regimes by the military victory of the Western democratic nations has meant for many thinkers the definitive triumph of the liberal political systems. Others think, on the contrary, that these systems are already ideologically defeated and that they only survive temporarily, thanks to the inattentive totalitarian extremism and the allied military triumph* We do not know with certainty who will be right. But there is no doubt that the totalitarian repression of the liberal spirit has exacerbated it, and that, as opposed to the maximum demands of the

common good of society proclaimed by totalitarianism, a new system, personalism 35, proclaims the maximum demands of the particular good of the human person. Totalitarianism said: the persons, for the society and the nation. Authority has full right to obedience. Personalism says: * the person has inalienable superior rights which he must save in the face of authority. Obedience must be conditioned by these 35 There is no doubt that the Maritainian personalist system is inspired by the anti-totalitarian prevention, Meinvielle says that it is a theory “elaborated under the psychosis of fear of totalitarianism” (Critique of Maritain’s conception of the human person [Buenos Aires 1948I p.273).

rights. Social evolution is moving towards the integral emancipation of the human person. Personalism, the present ideological and social concretion of liberal and democratic rationalist humanism, is the mental and practical expression of the current problem of obedience”.

Having pointed out the present crisis of obedience and the cause to which it obeys, we will now examine the main objections of modern humanism against this great virtue of obedience. io.

Modern objections against obedience

223. We use the expression “modern” not in the sense that these objections against obedience are entirely new and peculiar to modern times—they have always existed, in every epoch of human history—but because of the degree of extreme passion and virulence that they have reached in our own day. Nor are we going to exhaust the matter, but

only to collect some of the most specious, spectacular and frequent ones. i.ft Constant obedience and submission to an alien will is an insult and an attack against human freedom, which is the greatest spiritual good of man. Response. Obedience and submission to the legitimate superior, the authentic representative of God, not only does not destroy human freedom, but, on the contrary, invigorates and elevates it to its highest level. Let us listen to Valuy, reasoning admirably 36:

“The freedom of a being lies in the power and ease with which he tends to his ultimate end, and the freer he is the more he has the means at his disposal to fulfill his destiny. Therefore, the freedom of the children of God consists in humble submission to the laws that prevent them from going astray; and, as St. Bernard says, this freedom increases as these laws find more resources to tend directly to salvation and to God, who is their ultimate end. Therefore, the freedom of the religious increases in proportion to the means he has to walk to perfection and to the obstacles that are removed from his path. Then the rules of his institute and the orders of his superior, protecting him, on the one hand, against the snares of the devil, against the seductions of the world and against the rebellion of the passions, and, on the other hand, strongly stimulating him to the practice of his duties, inasmuch as they favor his freedom inasmuch as they more effectively free him from the obstacles that endanger his virtue and zeal, and more energetically incline him to the good. Those rules and those commands are to his liberty what wings are to birds, sails to ships, dykes to rivers, rails to the locomotive, and barriers to him who walks on the edge of a precipice. Far from destroying freedom, they preserve it, ennoble it and prevent it from exCf. The Virtues of the Religious p.i4S-i47.

It is not a jailer, but the guard of a prince; it is not the guard of a prison, but the guard of a cindadella. “Not being able to take away from us,” says Bossuet, “this liberty of doing evil, at least the rules restrain and narrow it, as if they feared it might escape them. What I could fear most was my intelligence, full of darkness, and my heart, full of perverse inclinations; but religious obedience has come to put God’s judgment in place of my judgment, and His will in place of my will. If a star is the satellite of another star, its subordination to the main star, far from making it a slave, constitutes its glory and its life: as long as this dependence lasts, it shines in space. But the day in which it should attempt to subtract itself from its influence, the day in which it should emancipate itself from the luminous body around which it gravitates, that imprudent and capricious emancipation would be fatal to it; and, wandering and vagabond, it would lose itself in that shore-less sea of infinite space, extinguishing itself in a sphere of darkness and immobility”.

In a word: freedom does not consist in the sad power of straying into the ways of evil—that is a defect and deprivation of freedom—but in being able to do good without hindrance or obstacles that prevent us from doing so. And religious obedience, by closing us off from the paths of evil and leading us by the hand along the paths of good, not only does not destroy our true freedom, but rather strengthens and perfects it, making it reach the highest level to which it can soar in this life. 2. Obedience diminishes the value and merit of our acts. The good that is practiced spontaneously is more meritorious than that which is performed under compulsion of necessity or by the imposition of others. Answer. It is completely false. Let us

listen to the Angelic Doctor admirably resolving the objection in a text that we have already quoted above;

“The necessity that comes from coercion makes the act involuntary and excludes the reason of praiseworthiness and merit. But the necessity that is born of obedience is not of coercion, but completely free, inasmuch as man freely wills to obey, even if at times he does not want precisely that which he is commanded (e.g., because it is painful or unpleasant to him). Therefore, since man submits himself for the love of God, through the vow of obedience, to the necessity of doing things which in themselves are not pleasing to him, everything he does is more pleasing to God, even if it is metm excellent. And nothing better can man offer to God than the submission of his own will to another for love of God” 57.

Religious obedience, in fact, far from diminishing the merit and value of our acts, elevates and perfects them, making the value and merit of the virtue of religion fall upon them, which converts all the good acts of the religious into 37

2-2,186.5 ad 5* The explanatory parenthesis is ours.

a true and unceasing worship of God that is highly sanctifying and meritorious. Obedience is like a magic wand that transforms everything it touches into pure gold, especially if it is obeyed at the impulse of charity, which is the queen of all the virtues and to whose perfection all the other virtues and the evangelical counsels themselves are directed and ordered. 3. Obedience destroys our own personality by annulling in us all our own initiative and forcing us to a constant and perpetual childishness. Answer.

Three false affirmations are contained in this objection, which at first sight is so gaudy and which is so often repeated in our days. For the truth is that obedience does not destroy our personality, but rather invigorates and increases it; nor does it annul in us all initiative of our own, but rather channels and secures it; nor does it oblige us to a constant and perpetual childishness, but rather pushes us towards true and full Christian virility. Let us prove it in parts.

a) Obedience does not destroy our personality, but rather invigorates and increases it. Today there is much talk of “formation of the personality”, of “development of the personality”, of “exercise of one’s own personality”, etc.; but frequently one does not have exact ideas about what constitutes the authentic and true personality, and many times it is confused with the eccentricity of a histrion or the exacerbation of one’s own pride and selfishness, which is, precisely, the most contrary thing that can be given to the true and authentic personality. Indeed. No one will dare to deny that the highest human personality consists in attaining the human ideal of perfection considered as a whole. If a man excels extraordinarily in some partial aspect of that human ideal, we say of him that he has a great artistic, scientific, political, etc., personality, since he has attained perfection in that particular aspect of human life. But in order to be able to affirm that a man has a great personality (thus, without any adjective) it is necessary that he appears before our eyes as an exceptional man from the psychological and human point of view. Applying these simple concepts to the supernatural order, it follows that the true and authentic Christian personality consists in the perfect imitation of Jesus Christ. The personality of Christ, in fact, is the highest that ever was or ever will be given among men, since it was not a human personality, but a divine one. In Christ, although there were two

No human personality-no matter how high and perfect we may imagine it-can ever be compared with the divine personality of Christ; between the two there will always necessarily be an infinite distance. Nevertheless, the Christian ideal will consist in approaching as closely as possible to the divine psychology of Christ, trying to reproduce-even at an infinite distance-the fundamental traits of the same. The intelligent reader has already drawn the consequences that follow from this doctrine. Only those who resemble Christ, and to the extent that they resemble him, have attained the authentic and genuine Christian personality. And no one resembles Him so much as he who, out of love for Him, immolates his own will for the sake of obedience to the one who represents Him on earth. Precisely because Christ "humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross..., God exalted him and gave him the name above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, whatever is in heaven and on earth and in the depths" (Phil 2:8-10), so that Christian obedience-especially religious obedience, sanctioned by a vow-far from destroying our own personality, invigorates and increases it, bringing it to the height of its perfection. To deny this, it is necessary to have completely lost, not only the supernatural spirit of faith, but the simple Christian common sense. b) Religious obedience does not annul in us all our own initiative, but it channels and assures it. Few have spoken with such energy and lucidity about religious obedience as St. Ignatius of Loyola in his famous letter to the Religious of Portugal 38. Here are the saint's own words: fcWith this, it does not detract from the fact that, if something should appear to you different from what you represent to the superior, and in prayer it seems to you in

divine obedience to agree to represent it to him, you cannot do it. But if in this you want to proceed without suspicion of your own love and judgment, you must be in an indifference before and after having represented, not only for the execution of taking or leaving the thing in question, but also to be more content and to consider as better what the superior orders".

The conduct of the saints often supports this criterion. St. Teresa of Jesus was not a prioress, but a subject, in the mo3
8 JWe will outline it in the following number (224),

When, by the command of Christ himself, she took the difficult and risky initiative of reforming the Carmelite monastery of the Incarnation in Avila, and although she obeyed punctually when her superiors ordered her to stop working on it, she was firmly persuaded that by unknown means and ways the reform would not fail to take place. The religious not only can, but must offer to his superiors his own initiatives and apostolic projects, but with absolute rectitude of intention, that is, thinking only of the greater glory of God and the good of souls. It is a way of facilitating their work of government, suggesting to them ideas that perhaps would not have occurred to them. In this regard, a contemporary author 40 wisely writes: "The last word belongs to the superiors. But the superior must consult the competent and listen to the subjects. First, because without asking for and admitting reports, he can very well be mistaken. Second, to maintain among his subordinates the prestige he needs as a sensible and impartial man. Even to nourish and foster their confidence.... Above all to reward and stimulate the interest that the subjects take for the common good... Finally, when

it is a question of subjects inspired by God, “so as not to extinguishin the words of the Apostle-the Spirit”…. For which reason it is necessary to agree with Bevenot that, if the last word must be pronounced by the hierarchy, true progress can demand that prophecy be granted the penultimate word”.

c’t Religious obedience does not force us to a constant and perpetual infantilism, but pushes us towards true and full Christian virility. We have seen that obedience does not annul, but rather develops and perfects our authentic Christian personality, thus distancing us more and more, consequently, from all spiritual infantilism. Who would dare to label as infantile spirits a St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Francis Xavier, St. Alphonsus Liguori, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Therese and many other souls of a reciedumbre and virility as great as their obedience? The angelic St. Therese of the Child Jesus herself knew how to harmonize in an astonishing way her spirit of “spiritual childhood”-so radically different from “infantilism”-with an energy and strength of soul that astonishes and amazes. Such are the main modern objections against religious obedience, and we can already see that they are totally lacking in substance.

Lumbreras, O. P., Obediencia y profetismo: Ciencia Tomista 83 (1956) 352-353.

dament. All the others that can oppose it vanish with the same ease and simplicity, just by having a little of that “sense of Christ” of which St. Paul speaks (I Corinthians 1:1) and which the human spirit, full of pride and self-love, will never understand. St. Paul himself also wrote that “the

animal man (that is, the one dominated by the human spirit) cannot understand the things of the spirit of God” (I Cor 2:14). Before the “animal” man, all reasoning in favor of obedience is useless: he will never understand it.

Article 3

PRACTICE OF RELIGIOUS OBEDIENCE We have examined in the previous article the fundamental principles of religious obedience. Let us now see how to put them into practice in order to make the most of this great virtue for our sanctification. The following points will be explained: 1.

Degrees of perfection in obedience.

2.

Mode of obedience.

3.

Obedience and supernatural merit.

4*

Means to reach the perfection of obedience.

5.

Jesus is an incomparable model of obedience.

ó.

Falsifications and deformations of obedience.

1.

Degrees of perfection in obedience

224. In his famous letter to the religious of Portugal, St. Ignatius of Loyola teaches three degrees of obedience that have become classics: obedience of execution, of will and of understanding. The following is the outline of this Ignatian letter, to comment later on the famous three degrees that he proposes41: “1. The desire of St. Ignatius that obedience be the characteristic virtue of the Society because of the goods that this virtue brings and what Sacred Scripture recommends it, and because it is like a cipher and compendium of the other virtues. z. Fundamental principle of obedience: To see Christ in the superior, without focusing on the good or the bad in the human person,

3.

Degrees of obedience:

First grade.

Obedience of execution. Low value of this grade.

41 We take the outline from the Obras completas de San Ignacio de Loyola (BAC, Madrid IC52) P.833-834.

Second degree. Obedience of will. Intrinsic value of the sacrifice of obedience. The merit is such that one can renounce any other virtuous act through obedience. Free will is perfected by obedience. Danger of bringing the will of the superior to one’s own. Third degree. a)

Obedience of understanding. Its nature:

It is possible: the will can influence the understanding.

b) It is just: it is reasonable to give a right rule to judgment and to conform his will to that of God. c) It is necessary: to make subordination perfect, to preserve oneself from the illusions of self-love, so that he who obeys may be at ease, to preserve union. d) It is perfect: man immolates what is most excellent, completes the holocaust, implies an admirable victory. 4.

General means for its achievement:

Humility, meekness.

To see God in the superiors. To seek reasons in favor of what is commanded. To accept what is ordered blindly, without further inquiry, with docility similar to that which one has in things of faith. 5.

Particular means:

6. Representation to superiors 42 is not opposed to the perfection of obedience, as long as it is done under the proper conditions. Necessity to represent with indifference and with full freedom. 7. Concluding remarks. Obedience extends also to those who have some office towards their respective superiors. The prosperity of religious families depends on obedience, due to the law of subordination which is explained and applied to religious orders.

S. Exhortation dience”.

end.

Example of Christ. As can be seen, the letter of St. Ignatius-drafted by Fr. Polanco, but signed and no doubt revised and perhaps retouched by the saint-is of great doctrinal richness. Its third degree-obedience of understanding, which some confuse with blind obedience-has suffered rude attacks; but

we believe that only in this third degree, rightly understood, does religious obedience reach its full perfection and development. Let us examine more slowly each of these three degrees. a)

Execution obedience

225* As its name indicates, the obedience of execution is that which executes externally what is commanded by the superior, but without being accompanied by the internal will to carry it out or, even less, by the intellectual submission of the one who obeys. Here is how a theologian of our day describes it43: 42 By representation, St. Ignatius understands the humble exposition to the superior of the reasons that we might have for seeing things differently from the way he sees them, in order to beg him to desist from ordering us to do so. (Author’s note.) 43 p. José Cobreros, S. T.f Obedience and personality, in Acta? del Congreso nacional de perfecáón y apostolado vol.3 (Madrid iQS$) p.208.

“When I receive an order from a superior, it may happen that I judge it to be nonsensical and, therefore, not in conformity with his judgment. There is, then, no obedience of understanding. Neither do I really want the order he gives me, I do not conform my will to his will, the elicit act of the will does not take place, there is no obedience of the will. Here we have only obedience of execution. Which is, properly understood, obedience of the will, in the sense that it is the will that has commanded the members, etc., to

execute what the superior has ordered. When the will does this, it is said that there is obedience of execution>>>.

It is already understood that such obedience has nothing to do with the virtue of religious obedience, nor does it have any value in the supernatural order. It is a merely natural obedience - the supernatural motive is totally lacking - of mere external submission, without any merit before God. It is an obedience of a slave or a machine, of pure routine, which easily degenerates into unconscious and irrational automatism. Dealing with this first degree of obedience, St. Ignatius writes in his famous letter to the Portuguese 44: “I also wish that it would be well established in your souls that the first degree of obedience is very low, which consists in the execution of what is commanded, and does not deserve the name, because it does not reach the value of this virtue, if it does not rise to the second, of making the will of the superior one’s own; so that there is not only execution in the effect, but conformity in the affection with the same will and not to will. That is why Scripture says that “obedience is better than sacrifices” (i Reg i5,zz); because, according to St. Gregory, “for other sacrifices one kills the flesh of others, but for obedience one’s own will is sacrificed” 4S. b)

Willing obedience

226* Let us listen to a modern author describing it admirably 46: “It is interior submission, which accommodates the will of the inferior to that of the superior and moves him to comply willingly with what the superior has prescribed, because he sees him as God’s lieutenant. It is indispensable to give value and greatness to obedience of execution and to convert it into a supernatural virtue. The true obedience of will demands above all: I.° That one accepts without difficulty what is commanded, with the spirit free of all voluntary repugnance, of all consented

opposition. The repugnance experienced before a command does not harm the perfection of obedience if it is involuntary, if it does not defer the execution nor diminish interior submission; it only makes the acts more difficult, but also more meritorious, before God. If the repugnance is born of immortification or consented self-love, it obviously diminishes the quality of obedience. The religious who practices obedience of will well sees only the will of God in the orders he receives. 4 5 St. Gregory, Morals c. 14 n. 28: PL 76,765. Cf. Brief Treatise on the Religious State n.286.

2° That the order be carried out with love and courage, overcoming the difficulties that may be offered and generously disposing oneself to the sacrifices that God may require. The best way to obey with perfection and to please God, who wants to be served with a joyful heart, is to obey with supernatural love both what is commanded and the superior who commands. It is a matter here of love of will, always possible, in spite of natural repugnances. The religious who obeys his superior only out of natural affection practices an act of friendship more than of obedience. But if affection for the superior is added to other supernatural motives of submission, it is very useful and desirable, because it makes obedience easier, more prompt and more cordial; in this case one does not obey out of affection, but with affection, which is very desirable. For this reason St. Augustine recommends to superiors that they desire more to be loved than to be feared. 3.0 The perfection of the obedience of will lies in the total indifference, which leaves full freedom to the superiors to dispose of their subjects for any employment and place. The religious who has achieved this indifference shows to have consummated the total

sacrifice that supposes the obedience well understood: sacrifice of the own will, to have in every circumstance the certainty of fulfilling the will of God",

However, in spite of the great excellence and value of this second degree of obedience, it is not yet the supreme. The obedience of understanding or judgment, which constitutes the third and last degree of perfection, has not yet been reached. With the obedience of will there is still the discrepancy of judgment: "I obey the order, because I see that what the superior wants is what God wants me to do. I embrace the order, I want it sincerely with my free will. But, on the other hand, it seems to me to be an unwise order; I, in the case of the superior, would not command that". There is here an obedience of will, but we do not yet have the obedience of judgment, c)

Obedience of judgment

227 It constitutes the highest degree of obedience to which a rational creature can attain. It consists in obeying the order received, not only with promptness of will, but even surrendering our interior judgment to conform it to that of the superior, except in the case-psychologically impossible for the understanding-that the superior's error would appear with such clear and absolute evidence as that two and two cannot be five, even though the superior says so. Here is how this obedience is described by the same author we have just quoted 47: Cf.

"At the same time that the inferior submits his will to that of the superior, he must, if he wants obedience to be perfect, also submit to him his judgment, that is to say, his own way

of looking at the orders he receives: this is called obedience of judgment. The religious who has reached this degree, the highest of interior obedience, strives to persuade himself that what is commanded is, at least for him, better than the contrary, except in the very few cases in which the contrary is preferable with evident certainty. Obedience of judgment or of intellectual submission is necessary for two reasons: a) Without it, obedience of execution and of will cannot be maintained for a long time. It will be very difficult to obey promptly and entirely, if one disapproves interiorly of the order received; one will execute it with displeasure, and, consequently, without decision or care, if one considers it ill-conceived or unreasonable. It is certain that the understanding and the will will will not always be in agreement: one can see clearly where the best thing is and still not want it, and, on the contrary, one can want a thing, even if one judges it subject to serious inconveniences; in spite of this regrettable divorce of our faculties, it is certain that, ordinarily, to assure full obedience of will, one must submit one's judgment to that of the superior and see the order received as useful, prudent and beneficial. b) What vouches for obedience before God is the sacrifice of the most precious goods that we offer him for it, namely, the independent use of our higher faculties, will and understanding. Not to elevate ourselves to the obedience of judgment would be "rapine" in our holocaust, for we would keep the most precious of it and thus lose many of its merits. Perfect obedience does not prevent the religious from exposing to the superior considerations and well-founded and legitimate objections in matters that he judges important; sometimes there can even be an obligation, if he foresees in the position that obedience assigns him the proximate danger of sin. The superior does not pretend to know everything; he needs to be informed about what he does not know; he does not believe himself infallible, and he will be grateful that by informing him he will be helped to

govern better. But the observations of the subject must always be very respectful, and must be presented with the disposition to fully comply with what the superior decides. When the superior maintains the order, the inferior can appeal to the superior authority to ask that it be annulled, if he believes that such an order is seriously prejudicial to him; but he must begin by submitting, for in matters of obedience the recourse is never suspensive. Means for practicing obedience of judgment.

The two main

are the spirit of faith and humility. i.° The spirit of faith. Supernatural obedience is, above all, an act of faith. Faith is that which shows the superior as the representative of God, even if he has imperfections and defects and can be carried away by passion in his commands or prohibitions. By faith one sees Jesus Christ hidden behind human frailties, just as he is hidden behind the sacramental species, whether consecrated by a holy priest or by a priest of little virtue and even unworthy. The spirit of faith is, then, what assures the perseverance and perfection of our submission, whatever the circumstances; it gives us the conviction that nothing more pleasing to God can be done than to obey men placed in their place. Religious life

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2. Humility. Obedience, besides being an act of faith, is in the religious a practical expression of humility. When the soul is filled with reverence for God, it submits itself without difficulty to his representatives, in order to fulfill his will in everything. For lack of intellectual submission, the proud

man cannot be perfectly obedient. The rebellion of Lucifer and the evil angels, as well as the disobedience of Adam and Eve, had their principal origin in pride. The religious lacking in humility easily considers himself more perspicacious than his superiors, even when he executes their orders, and because he is repulsed by obedience of judgment, he sometimes pretends to take refuge with irony, and even with a certain insolence, in a blind obedience that has nothing supernatural, and which is a counterfeit of true obedience".

As we have indicated above in the outline of the letter of St. Ignatius to the Portuguese religious, this obedience of judgment is possible, since the will can prevail over the understanding in its assent as long as it is not impeded by evidence to the contrary; it is just and reasonable, since it gives a right rule to judgment; it is necessary for the full perfection of religious obedience, and it is perfect because it realizes the perfect holocaust and full immolation of oneself on the altar of obedience. Insisting on the possibility, necessity and excellence of the obedience of judgment until arriving at the so-called blind obedience (rightly understood), Father Llamera 48 writes with great success: "Possibility of the obedience of judgment. To what extent is this assent of the subject to the criterion of the superior possible? It is necessary to answer without exaggeration. It is not always possible at all, but it is usually possible in general. The impossibility is given in the face of the evidence of the superior's error. Good will has no power over intelligence in the affirmation or denial of the evident. Identified with truth, it would have to destroy itself in order to deny it. It is a metaphysical impossibility. There can also be a psychological-moral impossibility, by negative or positive conviction of the subject, which is insurmountable in fact. 49. But it causes from sityo an effective or voluntary predisposition to consider the superior's judgment and command as right; and this predisposition powerfully

influences the intelligence of the subject, moving it ordinarily to agree with authority. It is a simple application of the general law of the influence of the will on intellectual convictions. And this influence is very great, for in the functional order the intelligence thinks only when and in what the will wishes, and in the objective order, where evidence does not decide, voluntary preference decides, that is to say, the intelligence gives as true or more probable what for the will is more good or more dear 50.

48 Cf. M.

Llaxíera,

O. P., The Current Crisis of Obedience: Spiritual Theology vol. i.

(1957) n.3 p.443-446.

49 Cf.

Henry A. M., O.

37 P'Z8. 50 Cf. 1-2,17,6.

P., Obedience cQmvn and obedience reiiejow:

Documents 16.3

C.6. Obedience

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life, in which there is the excogitation of means and resources that can be more effective for the pre-established and accepted ends, what doubt is there, according to this, that in this field the influence of the will has free play in the opinions and that the one predisposed by obedience will

make them run through the channel of authority? 5i This is the law and psychological experience on which St. Ignatius bases the possibility of the obedience of understanding, so highly recommended by him: “But whoever intends to make an entire and perfect oblation of himself, besides the will, it is necessary that he offer the understanding (which is another and supreme degree of obedience), not only having a will, but having the same feeling with the superior, subjecting his own judgment to his, inasmuch as the devout will can incline the understanding. For although the latter does not have the freedom that the will has, and naturally gives its assent to what is represented to it as true, still in many things in which it is not forced by the evidence of known truth it can with the will incline more to one side than to the other; and in such things, every true obedient person must be inclined to feel what his superior feels” 52. The spirit of obedience is in charge of the reality, St. Ignatius warns very accurately that good obedience does not incline to criticism, but to the approval of the opinion of the authority. This is a good orientation to diagnose the pathogenic origin of the current critical attitude. It is the spirit of disobedience that inclines one to systematically discuss the competence and correctness of authority. For the obedient, the presumption is in favor of the superior. So is desire. And obedience of understanding is in him the precious flower of obedience of will. The necessity of this obedience. The possibility of the obedience of judgment having been proved, everything proves its necessity for the perfection of this virtue. The first reason is the very reason for its possibility. Obedience tends, by its own submissive condition, to the subjection of the intelligence. It is therefore necessary that this possibility become a reality in the very measure of the perfection of obedience. Obedience of judgment also demands the very end of obedience, which is to assure the practical rectitude of the reason, of the will and of the activity of the subject. The providential end of

obedience is none other than the best direction and guidance of man toward his end. Well then. The subjection of the intelligence of the subject, which must be moved, is necessary, as St. Ignatius reasons, so that he may receive the moving or perfecting influence of the superior, and also to prevent him from error, so easy, observes the saint, in things proper to him, and more so in spiritual things. This obedience is also necessary, in the reasoning of St. Ignatius, to facilitate obedience of will, which cannot be easy going against one's own judgment. Finally, it is necessary for good executive obedience, because without it it would be very difficult to be as it should be, that is: persevering, loving, joyful, 51 "When we speak of obedience of understanding we must understand it in the sense of "it was Ja voluntad, aided and elevated by virtue, inclines the one to want to see and discover the will of God in those manifestations of the same, in the norms of the legitimate superiors" (Baldomcro Jiménez Duque, Pbro, Problemas actuales del sacerdote (Madrid 1955I p.154)* Cf. Motte A., O. P., Théologie de Vobéissance: Colee. L'Obéissance... p.87. 52 Letter of Obedience, ed. cit. p. 837-38.

prompt, simple, humble and strong. On the contrary, it would easily be sad, tardy, sluggish, inconstant, with great detriment to its merit. St. Ignatius also gives, as a reason for this obedience, the personal peace of the subject, incomparable with the uneasiness that dissension with the superior must produce in him, and the public peace of the society, which rests on the unanimous sentiment of the head and the members, that is, of the members with the superior and, consequently, of all among themselves. Finally, in religious who voluntarily embrace a life of obedience in

order to make an entire surrender and holocaust of themselves to God, this obedience of judgment is particularly necessary, as an oblation of the best part of their being, which is their intelligence. Blind obedience. With this it is already obvious the acceptable sense of blind obedience or blind obedience recommended by St. Ignatius with other saints, and today abhorred and vilified in the name and defense of human dignity Without irony or literary game we must say that these challenges are blind sticks, because they do not give in the obedience that the saints with this name propose, but in the one that the impugners imagine. Which is to say that it is enough to understand it to defend it. And what is to be understood by it is that obedience which, presuming and believing that what is commanded by the superior is right, “as an ordinance of God and his most holy will,” in the expression of St. Ignatius, dispenses with justifying itself with the particular reasons of the command and of what is commanded, and concentrates all the strength of the intelligence and of the will on the best fulfillment of what is commanded. This blind obedience is not, therefore, an irrational obedience, since it is based on the very rational reason that authority, in itself, must be recognized as transmitting the thought and will of God to the subject, and, therefore, that, as long as there is no serious reason to think otherwise, it is reasonable to accept his orders as good and to employ intelligence, not in thinking up one’s own reasons for accepting them, but in seeking the best means of fulfilling them. It is, therefore, a very clear-sighted obedience in its motivation, which is the divine competence of authority, and in the way of obeying, which is by putting into play all the possibilities of execution. It is blind only insofar as it dispenses with seeking its own human reasons in order to base itself more purely on the divine reasons of the authority 54 It is possible that, despite this reasonable explanation, rationalist personalism will continue to protest that blind obedience is

an intolerable abdication of one’s own rational responsibility. In this case he will understand even less what we are going to add, and that is that blind obedience and, in general, religious obedience, and even more generally Christian obedience, have reasons far superior to those of mere human personalism. Without these divine super-reasons there would be no blind obedience, but neither would there be religious obedience nor Christian obedience, because there would not have been the obedience of Calvary either. Or would this supreme obedience have been verified by force of humanistic and personalistic reasons? St. Peter was very much in human reason when, taking Jesus aside, he began to admonish and dissuade him from going to Jerusalem to be crucified. But Christ sharply rebuked him, saying: “Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art a stumbling block unto me: for thou hast no regard for the things of God, but the things of men” (Mt 17:23). 53 Cf. Candido Anjz, O. P., Concepto de obedieticia perfecta: Ciencia Tomista 83 (1956) 305-336. Our reference, p.330*3354 Cf. A. Rodriguez, Ejerácio de perfección y virtudes cristianas 3 tr.5 c.6.

This must also be said. It must be said that the spirit of the Gospel is hidden from the wise and prudent of this world. St. Paul, who had little taste for euphemisms, said, simply, that the animal man does not understand the things of God. These things are so great that they do not fit in men filled with their own greatness. They fit only in the empty spirit of the humble. God fills the hungry and hungers the full. He enriches the poor and impoverishes the rich. Blind obedience closes its eyes to the human reasons why it wants to be empty, in order to better attend to the divine reasons

why it wants to be full. Whoever wants to see how luminous her eyes are, must enter into her spirit”.

Obedience of judgment, especially when it reaches that supreme degree of perfection which constitutes what is called “blind obedience,” presupposes, of course, a great spirit of faith and ardent charity. For although obedience is not a theological virtue, the more the mind is enlightened by a lively faith and the more the will is enlightened by an ardent charity, the easier and more spontaneous is the practice of this perfect obedience; in the same way that the employer is more inclined to put into practice the demands of social justice the more almsgiving he is and the more accustomed he is to practice the great virtue of charity with full hands. The religious must be on guard against being seduced by specious reasons against blind obedience (e.g., that of greater apostolic efficacy if we oppose the directives of the superior). In this regard, let us listen to the author who has been quoted several times 55; “What sometimes makes obedience difficult for certain religious in our day is not so much the spirit of independence as the desire, praiseworthy in itself, to achieve fruit in the apostolate, palpable fruit, which crowns their efforts with external success and immediate success. When faced with an order contrary to the plan that one had drawn up, submission becomes difficult and hesitant. For this not to happen, it is enough to see clearly that, if one has an exact idea of the apostolate, what must be sought is supernatural fruit, and that the only way to assure it is to submit one’s own work to obedience, that is, to the will of God. We must look at things with the eyes of faith and not forget the two effects of every action: one, in the human and visible aspect, and the other, in the divine and invisible. God has not promised that by obeying we will always achieve the greatest success in the human sense of the word; on the contrary, He has assured us that the infallible way of always achieving what is most

glorious for Him, what sanctifies us most and, consequently, what is most useful for the apostolate is obedience. This should be enough to force us to always obey without hesitation”.

As we have already said, the fundamental quality that religious obedience must have in order to be perfect and meritorious is that it be supernatural, that is to say, inspired and moved by the Spirit of God, and that it be a religious state.

for supernatural motives. Only then is it a true Christian virtue. An obedience inspired by some human motive, however right and legitimate it may be in itself, has ceased to be supernatural and, therefore, has lost all its merit in order to eternal life. But for the sake of completeness, let us specify some of its most important characteristics. No one should be overwhelmed by their number, which is not, however, exhaustive. If we try to pay attention to the fundamental quality we have just pointed out, all the others will emerge almost spontaneously, with the greatest simplicity and ease. Here are the main [56]: 1) Spirit of faith: the superior is Christ. Dom Columba Marmion bowed respectfully before his superior while saying interiorly: “Ave, Christe “[57]. 2) Firm persuasion that by obeying we are doing the will of God. He who commands can err; he who obeys can never do so. 3) Out of love: with a heart enlarged by love for God, we joyfully accept the immolation and total holocaust of our being. 4) Promptness: Christ is not kept waiting. To leave a letter unfinished when the bell rings. To jump out of bed as if moved by a spring: “Here I am, Lord, ready to do your will” (Hebr 10:9). 5) Devotion: total

submission and surrender to the will of the superior as God's representative. 6) Spontaneity and joy, guessing the desires of the superior, anticipating them, manifesting with our instant and joyful acceptance of what is commanded that obedience makes us happy. 7) Humility and simplicity: with the greatest simplicity, as if it were the most natural thing in the world, without giving the least importance to the heroism of immolation. 8) Virility: with a magnanimous heart, with the energy of a hero, with the fortitude of a martyr, 9) Universality: everywhere, before any superior, in all kinds of mandates, without any exception. 10) Perseverance: always, with consolations or aridities, with health or sickness, with a strenuous spirit or with no strength at all. Obedience gives strength. In any case, if we do not feel we have the strength for habitual heroism, let us ask God for it with complete confidence. Has he not promised to grant us everything we need to fulfill his divine will perfectly? (cf. Mt 7:7-11).

For the rest, the difficulty of religious obedience is greatly exaggerated. In practice, in fact, in the vast majority of cases, its perfect practice does not imply any immolation nor does it require any habitual heroism. In general, the orders received by the religious from his superiors concern easy and simple things of ordinary and ordinary life56 Cf. our Theology of Christian Perfection 4-® ed. (BAC, Madrid 1962) n.3X5* 5? Cf. Dom Thibaut, Un mottre de la vie spiritudie: Dom Columba Marmion c.5 p-83*

ria. Rarely is he commanded to do anything really hard or painful. The majority of men who live in the world and who, apparently, are "freer" than the religious to do their own will,

have to obey their bosses in things much harder and more uncomfortable than those that the religious superior ordinarily imposes on his subjects. There is much exaggeration and exaggeration when one speaks so much of “immolation” and “heroism” in regard to religious obedience, Everyone has to obey, here on earth. And, frequently, the obediential burden of the religious, carried with full perfection, is one of the softest and lightest. Only when it is obeyed badly or half-heartedly (e.g., in a spirit of rebellion or interior insubordination) does it become hard and truly painful; but then let the hardness be attributed to the imperfection of the religious, not to the obedience itself, which is imposed on him. 3*

Obedience and supernatural merit

zz<). As is well known, the supernatural merit of our acts depends principally on the motive that impels us to practice them. Every good deed, done in the grace of God, carries with it some supernatural merit. But since charity is the only virtue whose object is God himself as the ultimate supernatural end, it alone is ordered by itself to the essential reward of glory, that is, to the greater or lesser degree of clarity and penetration in the beatific vision that we will enjoy in heaven. The moral virtues do not have as their object God himself, but rather the means to obtain perfect control of the passions, overcoming and surmounting the obstacles that oppose the perfect exercise of charity. Consequently, only through charity and by means of its influence or empire, can they be ordered to the essential prize of glory, since, left to themselves - that is, without the empire, at least virtual, of charity - they are only related to an accidental and secondary prize, of the many that there are in glory apart from the beatific vision, which constitutes the essential glory of heaven 58. Applying these principles to the virtue of obedience-which is one of the moral virtues,

dependent on the cardinal virtue of justice-*, we can distinguish as many as six different ways of practicing it in order to its supernatural merit. 5# We have explained all this at length in our Theology of the cardinal virtue of justice (BAC, Madrid 1963), n. 2. (BAC, Madrid 1963) n.47-51, to which we refer the reader who wants more information.

P.JJL Ascetical-mystical aspect of religious life

1. a If the religious has the misfortune of being in mortal sin, in performing-although with all accuracy and care-an act of obedience to his superior, he deserves absolutely nothing before God, since he lacks the very root of merit, which is sanctifying grace* 2. a If the religious is in the grace of God and obeys exteriorly, but grumbles against the superior, he commits, at least, venial sin (apart from the scandal that he may give to other religious). He is in a worse condition than in the previous case, since, obeying punctually when he was in mortal sin, he deserved nothing, but neither did he sin* Here he not only deserves nothing, but sins, at least venially, 3. a If he is in God's grace and obeys exteriorly and interiorly, but for a purely human and natural motive (e.g., so as not to be at odds with the superior, so that he does not punish him, so as not to look bad to others, etc.), his act of obedience is purely natural - coming from natural or acquired obedience - since the formal motive is that which is purely human and natural, Since the formal motive is what distinguishes the acquired virtues from the infused ones (which have the same material object), and the formal motive of that obedience has been purely natural and human, but since the one who performs it is in the grace of God, that human and natural act receives a certain radiance or influence of grace and habitual charity, but not of actual or virtual charity; Therefore, the supernatural merit does not reach him except in a very weak, remote, indirect and accidental way* 4. a If he is in the grace of God and obeys

exteriorly and interiorly for the formal reason of infused obedience, that is, because the superior is the representative of God, his obedience is strictly supernatural and meritorious before God, But, obedience being a moral virtue-which, for the same reason, does not refer to the ultimate^in, but to the means to attain it-is not ordered in itself to the essential reward of glory (beatific vision), but only to the accidental rewards (e.g., the greater or lesser glorification of the glory of the soul), but only to the accidental rewards (e.g., the greater or lesser glorification of the soul, the greater or lesser glorification of the body). It will have, therefore, in heaven an accidental reward. 5. a If he is in the grace of God and obeys exteriorly and interiorly, not only for the formal reason of infused obedience, but also under the rule of charity (that is, obeying out of love for God), his obedience is most perfect and acquires a double supernatural merit: that which corresponds to him as an act of obedience (accidental reward) and that which surpasses it (accidental reward).

adds the prevailing charity (essential reward). It is well known that the prevailing acts belong more profoundly to the prevailing virtue than to the prevailing virtue; from which it must be concluded that this act of obedience, carried out at the impulse of charity, belongs more to charity than to obedience itself. 6. If this same act of obedience, practiced in the manner just mentioned, were to acquire, in addition, the divine modality proper to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, perfecting the act of the infused virtues, its supernaturalness would be most complete (in substance and in manner) and, consequently, its merit before God (essential and accidental) would be immensely great. 4.

Means for attaining the perfection of obedience Here are the principal ones5 i.)

Representing God himself in the person of the superior.

230. The obligation of the subject to obey arises from the double power of which the superior is the depositary: a power sanctioned by the Church both to exercise paternal authority within the religious family and to receive the vow of obedience and to command in virtue of that vow. And who has given or could have given to the Church, represented by the pope or by the bishop, the necessary authority to consecrate and sanction this double power? God alone, God alone is the one who, in the person of the superior, exercises authority, governing in the bosom of the family, and He alone receives by the same means the vow of obedience, making use of it to make the constitutions, statutes and rules be observed. Almost like the priesthood, the legitimate choice of the superior invests him with a sacred character and gives him sublime powers, making him the living image of God. What could man desire more advantageous, in the abyss of darkness in which he is plunged, than that God himself should come to take him by the hand, clearing before him all the ways and making him distinguish the true from the false, the good from the bad? With what confidence would he then surrender himself to his guidance! But it has not entered into the ordinary designs of God to manifest his will to us either immediately by himself or by the ministry of angels. His will is, says St. Thomas, that man be directed by man as regards his salvation and perfection. Jesus Christ appears to Saul, and sends him to Ananias; the angel speaks to the centurion Cornelius of the business of his soul, and directs him to St. Peter. It is the same with the religious: at the moment when he begins the work of his perfection, God gives him his superior as guide, teacher, doctor and father. God commands, reproves, corrects, gives a charge or takes it

away, sends and returns 59 We gather here, with some retouches, the magnificent doctrine of Valuy in his precious little work Las virtudes del religioso (Barcelona 1931) p.i59s$'.

to call, to grant or deny by himself or by another, it is always he who governs; it is necessary to see God in his vicar, and to see him with respect, with love, with joy, with confidence. If we look away from this object, obedience and merit are lost, just as one who aims with a gun misses the target if he turns a little to the left or to the right. 2.0

Receive orders from the superior as orders from God himself*.

231 Obedience being a part of the virtue of religion, and having God and his worship for its object, he who would contract merit and acquire the habit of this virtue must perform acts that are in conformity with it, recognizing God in his lieutenant, reverencing his authority in his own, and receiving, as from his mouth, his commands and orders. Obedience, especially religious obedience, has a very remarkable feature of resemblance to faith, and it is the following, which makes us believe in a kind of mystery. I give alms to a poor person, and faith tells me that I console Jesus Christ; I approach the sacred table, and faith tells me that I really eat the body of Jesus Christ; I receive an order from my superior, and faith tells me that this order is from God himself. “He who hears you hears me” (Le 10:16). And St. Paul says: “Servants, obey your temporal masters with fear and respect, in simplicity of heart as Jesus Christ, not serving them with your eyes as if to please men, but as servants of

Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, and this with all readiness of mind, as one who does it to serve the Lord and not men only" (Eph 6:5-7). If this is how the Apostle speaks to slaves, how would he have spoken to religious? Would he not have told them to reject thoughts contrary to obedience with the same horror as those opposed to faith? Only in this way is obedience honorable and meritorious. Honorable: "Have I entered religion to serve men," said St. Aloysius Gonzaga. I would be the most despicable of slaves if I obeyed my superior as a man. I believe I obey God, whose lieutenant is my superior. Meritorious: To the obedient no less than to those who believe, our Lord Jesus Christ said: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed". jAy! What would be the merit in obeying Jesus Christ present and visible? 3.0 To allow the superior to dispose of us fully and entirely.

232. The religious should place himself in the hands of the superior, like the child who is in the hands of his aya, like the lamb that follows the shepherd, like the stick on which the old man leans,

like the instrument that we use without complaining, like the wax that lends itself to all molds, like the arrow that flies both northward and southward, like the lute whose strings respond to all the musician's desires, like the iron that the blacksmith hammers on the anvil, giving it one form or another, putting it either in the fire or in water. All these formulas and comparisons have been employed by the founders of religious orders.... Obedience consists less in doing willingly what is commanded than in being willing to do willingly what is commanded. There alone are peace and

true freedom of spirit to be found. “I do not know,” said a religious, “that I have ever been commanded to do anything against my will, because I am always ready to do whatever I am commanded. My maxim is to ask for nothing and desire nothing. St. John Climacus taught me that obedience is the grave of the will. 4.0 Never discuss the nature, motives and timing of what is commanded.

233* Why do they command me this rather than that? Why me and not someone else? Why today and not tomorrow? Why this way and not that way? Is the thing pleasant or annoying, vulgar or honorable, of great or no importance, convenient or inconvenient? Is the superior moved by the common good or by a particular interest? Are his ways of charity or of passion? On these points the true religious denies himself, not only the examination, but even the suspicion, even the slightest glance. To know in all cases the motives of the command certainly softens the bitterness of obedience, since to yield to known reasons and motives esteemed as good is to decide in a certain way by one’s own lights, and in the end to obey only oneself. But in religion it is necessary to say like the Hebrews: “Let us go to him who sees”; it is necessary to blind oneself and to say: I believe, and it certainly cost Eve dearly to talk about the reasons for the divine prohibition! Everywhere presumption is in favor of authority; in all times and in all nations it has always been believed that there is less danger in risking justice than obedience. $.° To put invariably as a rule of his will and judgment the will and judgment of the superior.

234. The best way to conform to the sovereign rule of all judgment and all will, which are eternal goodness and wisdom, is to give oneself without hesitation to what is commanded, provided it is not manifestly contrary to the law of God; it is to renounce with a kind of blind obedience

to one’s own lights and feelings, for the sake of the lights and feelings of God.

the feeling of the superior, when the intelligence does not see clearly the contrary; it is to approve what he approves, and to reject what he rejects. Without this, obedience is pleasing neither to God, for he is deprived of the best part of the holocaust, which is judgment and will; nor to the religious, who painfully drags the yoke. What is difficult in obedience is not precisely to do what is commanded, but to do it with repugnance. 6. to practice blind obedience, especially when it seems that the superior lacks prudence.

235. To remember that prudence is not the virtue of the subject, who has nothing to do but obey, and whose best rule of prudence lies in renouncing it, but of the superior, who, responsible for all, has the office of seeing and examining for all; that the latter, in order to govern prudently, has three things which the former lacks: the views of the whole and of the general good, the knowledge of causes, and the special graces which God grants to the delegates of his authority; that, in order to mortify our judgment, no less in need of mortification than our will, God sometimes permits that everything that a superior says and does may seem to us to be out of purpose, causing. The acts of the highest wisdom, in our eyes, take on the characters of unreason and folly; that this command, such as it is, is the best, at least for us, and the most appropriate to increase our merit and our abnegation. As for the result, we have nothing to worry about either, for God, accustomed as He is to bring good out of evil, will have no difficulty in converting it into His glory. Finally, let us not forget that, if the superior

can be deceived by commanding, the subject can never be deceived by obeying. Blessed John of Avila wrote to St. John of God: “Obedience should leave your spirit at peace, since you will not be called to account for what you have done on the advice of another. Is the order given the best, is it the most convenient? That is a matter for the superior: obedience excuses the subject. And if it is true that the religious must have the prudence of the serpent, he must use it only to know if there is sin in what is commanded; having known this, he must have only the simplicity of the dove to obey. And it can even happen that a command, considered good by the subject and bad by the superior, is criminal for the latter and meritorious for the former, and sends the former to heaven and the latter to hell. -

This blind obedience is therefore very prudent and very wise, which shelters the religious from every fault and every error, and St. John Climacus was right in defining it: “abnegation of one’s own prudence and judgment; the effect of an exquisite and wise judgment.

of a consummate prudence; simple conformity that does not examine, that does not contradict, but finds good all the commands and does not try but to fulfill them”. 7.0 Not to bother superiors with frivolous excuses or repeated remarks.

236 When one thinks that one can or should make a remark, let it be made with simplicity, humility, and respect, just to yield to one’s conscience, and to show just which side one is inclined to take, at least willing to submit, whatever the decision may be. He who ceaselessly returns to the charge as if to take the place by assault, or becomes irritated and

murmurs at the futility of his efforts, sufficiently manifests that he seeks himself, and not the glory of God. Not to be of those who seek themselves in obedience and who, in order to yield willingly, it is necessary for the superior to make certain concessions, or to have consulted or begged them. They do not say like St. Paul: What do you want me to do? They wait to be told, as the Savior said to the blind man: What do you want me to do to you? He who takes the superior to order him to do what he wishes, far from obeying his superior, forces the superior to obey him. Ah, we always lack the time or the strength to do what we dislike, and we have plenty of strength and time to do what we like. What a religious must above all fear is that an office be entrusted to him in conformity with his request, or. thanks to the repugnance he has manifested for another; for it may well happen then that in his work he loses part of his salary.

In case of recourse to the major superior, according to the rule, to present the reasons given by the immediate superior to support his refusal: to act otherwise is to compromise sometimes and to leave in bad place the major superior and to act with duplicity - with God, of whom he is the representative. It is useless to note that the unreasonable and impassioned refusal of a requested permission does not give the right to go ahead. What would be otherwise subordination and regularity? To be persuaded of the legitimacy of the request and of the injustice of the refusal, would be all the easier and all the more dangerous the more ardent and the more disordered the desire of the object. 8.°

Obey promptly.

237. Without delay, until the letter begun is left unfinished, and preferring obedience to anything else that is done, prayer, study, mortification, etc., in the conviction that, in the eyes of God, he who gives quickly gives twice. What we

do after the given sign is the part of the devil; not being able to obtain everything that evil spirit, he strives to obtain at least the first fruits.

The saints tell us: Obey as the stars in the immensity of space: “They were called, and said, Here we are” (Bar 3:35); as the officers of princes: their eyes are ready to look, their ears to hear, their feet to walk, and their hands to do; like James and John, who, not caring neither for their nets, nor for their boat, nor for their fish, forsake all, even their father, to follow our Lord; like Zacchaeus, who hastily climbs down from the sycamore tree and goes to prepare a banquet for the divine guest; like Lazarus, who, hearing the voice of the Master of life, comes out of the tomb, even though his hands and feet were bound and his face was covered with a shroud; as if Jesus Christ himself were calling us: with what diligence and with what zeal we would fly through difficulties! Well then, it is the divine Savior himself who gives the order or the signal by the voice of the superior or the bell. While St. Bernard was in ecstasy in the company of Jesus, the bell gave the signal to sweep the monastery; the saint was ready to leave, but Jesus remained in the same place where he had left him, and when he returned, he said to him: “Bernard, if you had not left me, I would have left you”. In similar circumstances Saint Lutgard said to our Lord: “O Jesus, wait for me there, and I will return as soon as I have finished my work. And Jesus waited for her. St. Ignatius had ordered Blessed Faber to go from Naples to Rome: the religious’s friends and doctors represented to him that, since this was the precise time of the heat and fever, he should wait for a milder season, for his life might be at stake on that journey. “The religious, Faber replied, does not need to live,

but he must, yes, obey”. His obedience, indeed, cost him his life; but, as he declared in an apparition to one of his friends, it earned him immense glory and happiness in heaven. “To obey a formal order given in virtue of holy obedience is good,” says St. Ignatius; “to obey a simple word, when the order is simply given, is better; but to obey a sign, to anticipate the order and the proposition, to yield to a known desire, that is perfect. 9.0

Obey in full.

238* One understands time, place, manner, circumstances, the whole and the details, the parts and the whole. To make no distinction between what is expressed in the rule and what is only implicit in the rule; between constitutions and disciplinary regulations; between what is of strict obligation and what is simply recommended.

The truly obedient are the soldiers of the centurion; they are told: Go, and they go; come, and they come; do this, and they do it. The religious placed in the hands of obedience must be considered extremely happy, for he can say to himself in all tranquility: I am on the way to salvation. Obedience is for me an excellent shortcut to climb’ to the summit of virtue. From morning till night, at every moment, whether eating or sleeping, praying or fasting, in the humblest as well as in the highest, I please God and do his will. 10.

Obey cheerfully.

239 With that cheerful alacrity with which we go to the refectory when we have a good appetite, and take all that

we need for the preservation of health and life, says St. Basil; At least by mastering so perfectly the repugnances of nature, that, instead of sad countenances, which indicate that the yoke is not borne, but dragged, the superior sees cheerful faces and that expansiveness and freedom proper to self-sacrificing subjects who never tire, who find nothing excessive, and whom it is rather to be restrained than goaded. God," says St. Paul, "expects each one to give as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor 9:7). If to serve God is to reign, to give to God is to receive, and joy must be found both in the gift and in the honor of the service. It does not seem but that, when nature is the more contrary, the more the religious reaches the height of his desires, and, consequently, that his pleasure is also the more superabundant. For, after all, in taking the vow of obedience, what did he expect: to immolate his judgment and his will. They will send me to a house under a climate perhaps contrary to my health; they will give me orders opposed in everything to my dearest inclinations, to my most deeply rooted ideas; no matter, I will submit, because it is necessary that I sacrifice my judgment and my will so that there may be virtue and merit in obedience, and I have come to religion precisely in search of virtue and merit. If what is commanded to me flatters my nature, if it finds an echo in the depths of my intelligence or my heart, I will be able to doubt whether in obedience I seek only my own satisfaction. But when it demands effort of the will and abnegation of judgment, it is evident that I have God, God alone in view; and since merit increases in proportion to sacrifice, I must diligently and zealously seek occasions that demand more generous efforts of the will and more complete abnegation of judgment, in order to increase at the same time sacrifice and merit. 11.

To obey indistinctly to all kinds of superiors,

240, Not only to those who-by a thousand concepts are worthy of our consideration and esteem, such as maturity of age, nobility, affability, knowledge, prudence, virtue, meekness, but even to those who do not have any of these qualities, but also to those who have none of these qualities, and who are not worthy of our consideration and esteem, such as maturity of age, nobility, affability, knowledge, prudence, virtue, meekness.

We must obey superiors not only in the person of the superior, but also in the person of the subordinate officers vested with a part of his authority, even when they are young, untalented, inexperienced, of humble condition and unpleasant exterior, rude and demanding, inconstant and capricious, unedifying, and, in many respects, the last of the house; for we must not obey superiors for their natural and supernatural gifts, but for God, whose place they occupy. However holy and experienced they may be, if we look at them only from the human point of view, we can always say with truth that their spirit is subject to error, and that their heart is the victim of some disordered affection; but what they lack in virtue and wisdom, God has; God, who, not being able to deceive himself, nor wishing to deceive us, is the infallible rule of virtue. We will not tire of repeating it: it is necessary to obey for God, for the love of God. The wounded self-love will accuse the superior of extravagance, of injustice, of anger, of worry, of despotism; it will stick to ill-intentioned spirits, whose envy has exercised a malign influence on it; it will seek on its way denouncers or judges of true or apparent weaknesses to invalidate the testimonies or to decline the sentence: no matter, the oracle has already been pronounced: “Every soul is subject to the superior

powers, because there is no power but of God; therefore, he who. Therefore, he who resists the power resists the ordination of God. And those who resist draw condemnation upon themselves" (Rom 13:2). "Be obedient to your masters with all fear, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are of hardened condition" (1 Pet 2:18). That their conduct is not in harmony with their dignity; that it is in flagrant opposition to their orders: "Do not do what they do, says our Lord Jesus Christ, but do what they say" (Mt 23:3). He who obeys only the superiors whom he esteems and loves, in what way does he differ from the laity and the heathen? Do the latter have difficulty in submitting to orders dictated by masters whom they reverence and love? 12.

Obey at all ages and in all of life.

241. Not only in the novitiate, in. In the novitiate, when the bonds of dependence surround the religious everywhere, and in the first years of profession, when authority still retains its prestige, but always, in sickness and in health, in all conditions and in all circumstances, in old age itself, when the yoke of obedience is already heaviest; and this no matter how many of the most important services have been rendered, even when the most important offices have been held, remaining until the end simple, submissive and candid as a child, in the hands of obedience.

13* Failure to distinguish between things that concern the body and things that concern the soul.

242. Remember that obedience regulates vigils, fasts, prayer, zeal, no less than work and rest; that there is no less

disorder in disobeying to pray than in disobeying to eat; and that self-will has the sad privilege of making evil that which was good, and worthy of punishment that which, without it, would have been worthy of reward. 14. Do not hesitate, by obeying, to compromise the success of the greatest works.

243. In the conviction that perfection does not consist in doing wonders, but in pleasing God; and that it is always enough when we do what God commands; let us gladly abandon a house, any job, where a long and painful work seemed to ensure abundant fruits in the near future, and this even if we foresee and are certain of its complete and irreparable ruin. This is the touchstone of obedience. It is never more perfect nor more meritorious than when, at the cry of “God wills it!” it sacrifices even the pleasure of doing good. “When a man,” says Father Balthasar Alvarez, “has spent a lot of money in cultivating his vineyard, I can imagine his pain if a horrible hailstorm destroys his land in a moment and robs him of its fruits. But suppose that hailstorm to be of gold, would his affliction be reasonable? Would there not rather be room for rejoicing at such a happy misfortune?” ¡Ah! For they are of gold and of diamonds those orders that contradict, so disastrous in appearance; and what the religious gains for himself and for others by obeying, is worth infinitely more than what he seems to lose; he would lose, on the contrary, and gain nothing, if he disobeyed under the pretext of preserving everything.

St. Ignatius thought so highly of the obedience of St. Francis Xavier that he was firmly persuaded that the slightest insinuation would be more than enough to make him pass from East to West, from Japan to Rome, abandoning, without a moment’s hesitation, his grandiose apostolic projects and whatever business he had in hand. 15. To obey, to be ready to annihilate himself in any way and to hide his talents and his forces.

244, Convinced that obedience gives more glory to God than the conversion of the world wrought without his approval, that God has no need of us, and that he has infinite resources to attain his ends, let us prefer

to do nothing, out of obedience, to undertake and execute the most brilliant and most useful works for the Church by her own will and movement, after the example of Mary, who, although her zeal for the glory of her Son was immense and she would have had the greatest satisfaction in carrying his name to the ends of the earth, consented to remain locked up in her house all her life, convinced that she would give greater fruit to God with the smallest act carried out out out of obedience in the depths of her home than with the prodigies of zeal that she had done for the Church, consented to remain shut up in her house all her life, convinced that she would bear greater fruit for God with the least act accomplished out of obedience in the depths of her home, than with the prodigies of zeal accomplished of her own free will in the face of the nations. But someone will say: “In the place where I am sent, in the job that is entrusted to me, in those children, in the midst of those uncouth people, my talent is buried. Has the light been made to hide it under the bushel? To this must such long preparations and such laborious studies be reduced?” Are you wiser than St. Athanasius, St. Paul and Jesus Christ? Or is your science more necessary to the Church than that of such eminent men? For St. Athanasius was hidden for five years in a cistern, St. Paul was imprisoned several times, and Jesus Christ for thirty years hid the divine light that he had brought us from heaven. It is fitting that the superior, not content with forbidding to the religious what is bad, dangerous or less good, should also sometimes, with discretion and for the sole purpose of testing them, forbid

them what is better, more excellent and more perfect. The virtue of obedience being the only one capable of restraining them, they have before God, in proportion to the zeal that animates them, the merit of obedience and the merit of the works that they wanted to undertake or continue.

5*

Falsifications and deformations of obedience

245 Without going to the excesses of frank and formal disobedience, which is the diametrically opposed sin to obedience, how many ways and means there are of falsifying or deforming this virtue, so contrary to the instinct of natural rebelliousness proper to the human spirit! Here are some of its main manifestations: 1) Routine obedience: pure automatism, without inner spirit, like the soldier in the barracks, like the clock that strikes the hours punctually, but ignoring that it strikes them.... Obedience without soul and without merit, because the value of virtue depends on the faith that inspires it and the charity that animates and vivifies it. 2) Wise obedience: always with the canonical code or rule in hand to know how far he is obliged to obey or where the superior begins to "exceed".... Cf. Colín, El cufio de los votos c.20, where the main concepts that we summarize here are broadly explained.

way of evading obedience to superiors, hiding behind the rule, just as a Protestant rebels against the Pope by opposing him to Scripture! 3) Critical obedience: "The superior is superior, of course, but this does not prevent him from being unsympathetic, rigorous, fragile, impulsive,

without a hint of tact or a hint of goodness...; that he often lacks sanity, prudence, opportunity and charity”. He is obeyed materially at the same time that he is flayed? Murmuring and criticism against superiors is one of the greatest plagues of religious life and the number one enemy of monastic obedience. Those who incur in this ugly vice do not realize that they do not obtain anything positive with it - the things continue as they were - and they do, instead, a very serious damage, sowing restlessness, uneasiness and indiscipline among the brothers. This is a great sin that truly cries out to heaven. 4) Mummified obedience: one does not have the opportunity to practice it, because the superior does not dare to command or because the subject skilfully evades his orders. Isolated*, invisible and silent in their employment, they avoid the presence of authority, and thus live, not against obedience, but outside of it. 5) Pseudo-mystical obedience: they resist their superiors under the pretext of obeying the Holy Spirit. Pure illusion! Since the orders of superiors are an authentic expression of the will of God, no one can, without falling into a false illusion, appeal to God against legitimate authority. Jesus Christ himself never allowed St. Margaret to go against the decisions of her superiors, not even when these decisions were contrary to his divine designs. Jesus himself ordered St. Teresa to obey her confessor when he forbade her to go ahead with the Carmelite reform: He Himself took it upon Himself to change the confessor’s heart 6*.

6) Camouflaged disobedience: it is the art of skillfully leading the superior, by dint of excuses and objections, to withdraw or modify his orders. One receives an order that displeases: “But if I have no aptitudes..., but if someone else will do it better!” A real assault, before which, in the end, the superior, tired, capitulates with great satisfaction of the subject. It is also disobedience in disguise not to obey any longer.

than to formal and explicit orders. The subject knows very well the will and desire of the authority, but does not take them into account at all under the pretext that there is no command or prohibition.

7) Paradoxical obedience: it is the one that pretends to obey by doing one's own will, that is, by imposing it on the superior. Without advice, without authorization, one throws oneself impetuously into a thousand occupations, works and works of zeal? For fear of provoking resistance and outbursts, superiors keep silent and let it be done. And so it is that many religious, otherwise well-intentioned, intelligent, active, can act as they please throughout their lives, without asking authority for anything other than freedom of action, which, unfortunately for them, is granted to them. Others, taking advantage of their influence, speculating with the services rendered or with an old comradeship..., by dint of entreaties, requests and even intrigues, end up by obtaining the jobs, employments or destinations that they like. Wretched diplomacy that, in the eyes of God, is a crude maneuver of their own selfishness and comfort. 8) Pharisaic obedience: it is the one that delivers a defeated will, but not submissive. Obedience of a slave, cowardice and hypocrisy at the same time. 9) Spirit of opposition: groups, factions, parties "of opposition" to whatever the superior orders or disposes. Truly satanic spirit, which sows division and discord. 10) Selfish obedience: inspired by self-interested motives to attract the sympathy of the superior and to obtain from him positions and mandates that fit his tastes and interests, without caring at all about what God wants or what pleases Him. 11) Murmuring obedience: who reluctantly accepts the order of

a superior and murmurs inwardly… and sometimes outwardly* with scandal to others and manifest harm to the common good. 12) Sabotage and lack of perfection in executing an order: sweeping will consist in shifting the dust, and meditation in dozing sweetly… How many are ignorant in our days of the delicacy of virtue! The teacher sacrifices the correction of the exercises of his students to his personal studies; the one who has to watch over the study or recreation allows himself to be absorbed by a leisurely reading.

Five or ten minutes is enough for someone else to prepare the class or sermon,,,,,, and so it all comes out. 13) Lazy obedience: “I didn’t have time…, I was busy…, I forgot…, I didn’t think it was so urgent…, I was going to do it right now”. You have to tell him to do it twelve times, and he ends up doing it wrong….

Such are the principal falsifications and deformities of obedience. The Lord rightly said to St. Catherine of Siena: “Oh, my dear daughter, how numerous are those who live in the practice of obedience and how rare, on the contrary, are those who obey perfectly!“62 But the latter offer to God a sacrifice of praise, which ascends to heaven in the odor of sweetness by the perfect and total immolation of themselves, which makes them a living reproduction of the divine martyr of Calvary. 6.

Jesus, incomparable model of obedience

246. Christ will always be the incomparable model of obedience. No religious will ever be asked to do the immense labors, sacrifices and bitter death that cost Jesus

his heroic obedience to the command he received from his Father. St. Paul exhorts us to imitate him with these moving words: “Have the same mind that was in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not count it robbery to be equal with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, and being made in human likeness, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God exalted him and gave him the name above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, whatever is in heaven and on earth and in the depths, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:5-11).

Let us listen to Dom Columba Marmion commenting admirably on this heroic obedience of Jesus Christ:62 “Let us contemplate for a few moments Jesus Christ, the perfect model of holiness: “You alone are holy, Jesus Christ,” and we will see that the first disposition of his most holy soul, which groups them all together, is a loving obedience to the Father. This is explicitly taught by St. Paul, revealing to us the divine secret hidden from the apostles, the first movement of Christ’s heart. The Word is incarnated to glorify his Father and save humanity through his grace. And what is the fundamental disposition that characterizes all his work? Obedience: “When I came into the world, I said, ‘Here I am, O God, to do your will’” (Hebr 10:5-7). The soul of Jesus contemplates the divine perfections, the infinite sovereignty of God, the majesty St. Catherine of Siena, Dialogue C.1Ó2 n.i. $ 3 Cf. Jesus Christ, ideal of the monk c.12 n.i.

of his being; and in an act of profound reverence, of adoration and dependence, he abandons himself entirely to

the fulfillment of the will of his eternal Father. This act of full and perfect obedience, by which he accepted the painful program of his life, of the sufferings, humiliations and pains of his passion and death, is the first act he performed, and with it he commits and sums up in advance his whole existence. After this first act, we see him “setting out like a giant” (Ps 18:6), along the path that the Father has marked out for him. In this path everything is ordered by obedience and everything comes from this first gift that the Savior will never withdraw. He will say that “he came not to do his own will, but the will of the Father who sent him” (Io 6:38); and obedience is so much the basis of his life that he calls it his food: “My food is to do the will of him who sent me” (Io 4:34). For thirty years he obeyed two creatures, Mary and Joseph: “I was subject to them” (Le 2:51). In spite of the transcendence of his divinity and of being the supreme legislator, not subject to laws, what does Jesus Christ say? That “not one jot or tittle of the law will pass by without being fulfilled” (Mt 5:18). And, indeed, we see him in everything pending the will of the Father; “I always do what pleases him” (Io 8:29), and he accepts with resignation the passion, because this is the paternal will: “As the Father has commanded me, so I do” (Io 14:31). And it is in his sufferings that his obedience is most expressively manifested. During the terrible agony of three hours, the sensitive part of his being is filled with terror before the cup of bitterness: “Father, if it is possible, take this cup away from me”; but his will submits to the divine dispositions: “Not my will, but yours be done” (Le 22:42). They arrest him as if he were an evildoer; he could easily free himself from his enemies, whom he prostrates at his feet with a single word; he could beg his Father to send him legions of angels; but he wants above all that “the will of his Father, expressed in the divine Scriptures, be done” (Me 14:49). For this reason he surrenders himself to his mortal enemies. He obeys Pilate, although a pagan, because he represents the

supreme authority (Io 19:11); he obeys his executioners; and on the point of expiring, to fulfill a prophecy, he exclaims that he is thirsty: “Then Jesus, knowing that everything had been fulfilled, in order to fulfill the prophecy, said: I thirst” (Io 19:28). He dies when everything has been fulfilled with perfect obedience: “He said, ‘All things are fulfilled; and bowing his head, he gave up his spirit’” (Io 19:30). The “All is accomplished” is the truest and most appropriate expression of his whole life of obedience: like an echo of the “Here I am” of the enamoring. They are two cries of obedience, and the whole earthly life of Jesus Christ revolves around these two poles.... This obedience of Christ was the means ordained by God and accepted by Jesus to save the world and restore to it the heavenly inheritance; it was an atonement for the disobedience of Adam, our first father; and we go to God uniting our obedience to that of Jesus Christ, who became our head and leader”.

Insisting on this heroic obedience of Jesus Christ, Fr. Valuy 64 writes: “By the disobedience of one man,” says St. Paul, “we all fell, and we were all raised up by the obedience of one God (cf. Rom. 5:19). Man,” says St. Augustine again, “had been disobedient unto death, preferring rather to die than to obey; the Son of God became obedient unto death, preferring to lose his life than to lose his obedience. Do you understand this lesson, you who are dust and ashes? Obey a
<>4 Cf. The Virtues of the Religious p. 138-139.

C.7. J~a fraternal charity

God to the point of becoming flesh, to the point of enclosing himself for nine months in the womb of a virgin, to the point of being born in a stable. A God obeys until he depends in everything on himself and Mary, his creatures; until he submits to the law of Moses, which he comes to abolish, and to the law of Caesar, dictated by pride and caprice; until he

hides his humanity and his divinity in a little house ignored by the rest of the world. A God obeys to the point of allowing Himself to be arrested, accused and condemned, to go up to an infamous wood, to expire in the midst of the most affronting torments, to be locked up in a sepulcher! And as if all this were not enough, that same God, now impassible and immortal, obeys in the sacred Eucharist until he takes and leaves, at the pleasure of his ministers, the sacramental life, until he remains a prisoner day and night in our tabernacles, until he exposes himself to the most horrible profanations, not once and in a single place, but everywhere and every day until the consummation of the centuries".

In view of these impressive examples of the humility and obedience of Jesus Christ, in tremendous contrast to our pride and rebelliousness, Bossuet rightly exclaims: "Human pride, come here and die of shame! In reality, the disobedient religious, or the one who complains and laments how hard it is for him to obey, should die of shame at the sight of the crucifix or the tabernacle. Nor can one understand how one can speak with impunity of the "rights of the personality", of "respect for human freedom" and a thousand other "arguments" of the sort that are so much talked about and abused today. All this collapses at the mere sight of the crucifix. There is not and never will be any other authentic and legitimate way of obeying than the one taught to all of us, with his word and his example, by the great Master of humanity, the Son of the living God, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Chapter 7

In a study destined to exalt the values of religious life and its enormous sanctifying power, a chapter dedicated to fraternal charity could not be missing. Charity is not only the most excellent of all the Christian virtues, the only one that directs them to the supernatural end as an extrinsic form of them all, but the one that alone, in its threefold dimension-God, neighbor and ourselves-summarizes and summarizes the whole law and the prophets (cf. Mt 22:35-40). Love of God is the first and most excellent form of supernatural charity, to the point that it values and conditions the other two aspects of charitable love, which, detached from the formal motive of charity-divine goodness in itself, the love of God, the love of neighbor and of ourselves-is the first and most excellent form of supernatural charity.

would ipso facto cease to belong to it and would become mere philanthropy or natural love of self, without any value in order to eternal life. However, we are going to dispense here with the first aspect of charity-love of God-and even the supernatural love that we owe to ourselves, in order to dwell only on the aspect relative to our neighbor: fraternal charity, approached principally from the angle of vision that religious life offers us. Let us set out in orderly fashion the following fundamental points: 1.

Triple foundation of fraternal charity,

2.

Characteristics of fraternal charity.

3.

Main obstacles that oppose it.

4.

The great models of charity.

i”

Triple foundation of fraternal charity

Fraternal charity rests on a triple foundation: one of a purely natural order, the community of nature; and two others of a strictly supernatural order: baptism and religious profession. Let us examine them separately. a)

The nature community

248. Since charity is a strictly supernatural virtue-to the extent that there is no purely natural charity2 , it seems that no simply natural foundation can be assigned to it. This is indeed the case. Charity-as such-does without (without destroying) the purely natural order, and relies exclusively on the goodness divinat as the sole foundation and sole motive of its threefold manifestation: God, neighbor and ourselves. Charity loves only God for himself; and all other things in God, through God and for God. Any love that does not have as its only foundation and formal motive the infinite goodness of God has ipso facto ceased to be a love of charity, and has become a love purely for itself. Cf. our Theology of Charity, 2nd edition (BAC. Madrid 1963). 2 The reason is that the theological virtues have as their direct and immediate object God himself in the supernatural order, that is, as the first Principle and ultimate supernatural End, and

no natural virtue can have God as its immediate supernatural object (cf. 1-2, 62:1-2). Something quite different happens with the infused moral virtues, which, not having God himself for their immediate object, but only the supernatural acts concerning the means, can have, and have in fact, a perfect parallel in the purely natural and acquired order.

The natural order, which has no value in order to eternal life, no matter how honest and legitimate it may be in itself. Nevertheless, leaving aside these incontrovertible principles of Catholic theology, there is no inconvenience in pointing out to the exercise of fraternal charity a remote foundation of a purely natural order: the simple community of nature, in fact. It is clear and evident that all the men of the world possess the same human nature and all form part of the great human family, without it being possible to exclude a single one of them, whatever their color, culture, age, etc., which are accidental circumstances that do not affect at all the depth of human nature. On the other hand, we know from Sacred Scripture and the infallible magisterium of the Church that Christ is the universal Redeemer of mankind,[3] and that there is not and cannot be a single man who does not currently participate or is not called to participate in Christ’s redemption and thereby obtain eternal life. Therefore, although it is true that in a present way only those who have received baptism and fulfill certain other Christian conditions belong to the Mystical Body of Christ, it is no less true that, remotely and potentially, all human beings without exception are called to be incorporated into that Mystical Body. Now then: supernatural charity can and must be extended to all those who in an actual or potential

way are still in time to be incorporated into the Mystical Body of Christ and to be one day our companions in eternal beatitude. 4 And since in this situation all men of the world are or can be found without exception, our fraternal charity must be extended to all of them without exception, being excluded from it only the demons and damned of hell, who do not even in potential preserve any ordination to eternal beatitude. 5. Answering the objection that it does not seem that all men can be loved with supernatural love of charity, since many of them do not form part of the Mystical Body of Christ, a contemporary author 6 rightly writes: “Certainly not, but all are called to be part of it* You are united to them by the community of nature; this community of nature3 Cf. Mt 20:28; Eph 1:7; 1 Tim 2:6; Tit 2:14; l Petr 1:18-19, etc.; cf, D 790,794,798. 831, *etc.* 4 Cf. 2-2:25:1-10. 5 Cf. 2-2,25,11. 6 J. Perinelle, O. P. “The Ways of God” (Barcelona 1962) p.181,

leza makes them similar to you, and, in spite of superficial or secondary differences, you will find in them the same vicissitudes of your own life, your own fundamental psychology, your loves, your misery and your greatness. This community of nature arouses in your heart a deep affectionate feeling towards them, although this feeling is easily obscured by opposing passions or interests. But, above all, Christ, who has redeemed them, works mysteriously in all to draw them to Himself; all may, under the action of His grace, enter tomorrow into intimacy with Him; all may become your companions for eternity. Therefore, in spite of their present separation, all are bound to you and are the object of your supernatural love.”

In addition to this first title or natural foundation of charity, which applies to all men of the world without exception-Christians or pagans, just or sinners-the Christian has two other titles or foundations, of a strictly supernatural order, to love his brothers and sisters in faith or religion: baptismal grace and religious profession. Let us examine them below.
b)

Baptismal grace

Therefore, the day of baptism is the greatest and most transcendental day in the life of a Christian, unless we prefer to grant that supreme title to the day of our Christian death, which will consummate forever and irrevocably our first incorporation into Christ. All the baptized are intimately united among themselves and with our divine Head, who is Christ. St. Paul revealed the great mystery to us in sublime paragraphs: “For just as the body has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so also is Christ. For we were all baptized into one Spirit, that we might be one body; and we all, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether servants or free, have drunk of the one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,” it does not thereby cease to be of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,” it does not thereby cease to be of the body. If the whole body were eyes, where would the ear be? And if the whole body were ears, where would the sense of smell be? But God has arranged the members in the body, each one of them as he has willed. If they were all one member, where would the body be? The members are many, but the body is one. And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you.” Nor can the head say to the feet, “I have no need of you”. There is still more: the members of the body which seem to be the weakest are the most necessary; and those which seem to

be the vilest we surround with greater honor, and those which we regard as indecent we treat with greater decency, while those which are decent in themselves have no need of more. Now then;

God arranged the body by giving greater decency to the one who lacked it, so that there should be no divisions in the body, but that all the members should have equal concern for one another. Therefore, if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; and if one member is honored, all the others rejoice with it. For you are the body of Christ, and each one in part, according to the disposition of God in the church" (I Cor 12:12-28).

It is impossible to speak more clearly and in a more moving way. All the baptized form one body with Christ, whose divine Head is Christ himself. And just as in the human body or organism there is perfect solidarity among all its members, so that when one of them suffers or rejoices, its suffering or joy is passed on to all the others, so we, the members of the Mystical Body of Christ, must feel intimately in solidarity with one another, suffering with those who suffer and rejoicing with those who rejoice, in imitation of the great Apostle, who lived these ideas in his heart: "Who faints that I should not faint? Who is offended that I should not be offended that I should not be offended? (2 Cor 11:29). "Since I am completely free, I make myself the servant of all, that I may gain them all. And I become a Jew with the Jews in order to win the Jews. With those who live under the Law, I make myself as if I were subject to it, not being subject to it, in order to win those who are under it. With those who are outside the Law I make myself as if I

were outside the Law in order to win them, not being outside the Law of God, but under the Law of Christ. I become weak with the weak, that I may gain the weak; I become all things to all men, that I may save them all” (1 Cor 9:19-22).

With regard to this universal charity, this “becoming all things to all people” that should characterize every Christian as a member of the Mystical Body of Christ, Father Perinelle7 rightly writes: “Your charity towards your neighbor, a sign of your condition as disciples of Christ, is the second stage of a theological virtue. Do not reduce it either to natural philanthropy or to simple beneficence. Do not love your neighbor solely out of human solidarity, nor for his natural qualities, nor with an exclusive view to his earthly good. Undoubtedly you need not make a clean sweep of all this, nor should you disinterest yourselves in it. Your affection must embrace the whole person, with his natural and supernatural elements. Human nature is good in itself and reflects a divine perfection, because it proceeds from God. Subsisting under grace, to which it serves as an indispensable support, it can be employed in his service, and the better constituted it is, the more apt it is for that service. Have this great Christian sense of man. Wish your fellow men, without stinginess, their full human development: health, vigor, knowledge, a worthy welfare, faithful friendships, a family and a country in which peace and happiness reign. This pleases God. Rejoice, without a shadow of envy; help them to achieve it. But love them first of all as children of God, as members of Christ, as heirs of heaven. 7 O.c. p.183-184.

P.III. The ascetical-mystical aspect of religious life.

Prefer in them the divine life to everything else and work ardently to procure it for them, even if for this you have to sacrifice, after the example of Christ, your human life”.

Love of neighbor, stemming from supernatural charity, is, apart from being a very grave obligation-the second commandment of the Law, according to Christ himself (Mt 22:39)-the best proof and guarantee that we fulfill the first and greatest of the commandments, which is to love God “with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind and with all our strength” (Mt 22:37; cf. Mk 12:30). For, as the Evangelist John admirably says, “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ but hates his brother, he is lying. For he who does not love his brother whom he sees, cannot possibly love God whom he does not see. And we have this commandment from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also” (1 Sir 4:20-21). Commenting on this passage of the beloved disciple of Christ, Dom Columba Marmion 8 writes with great wisdom: “I do not hesitate to affirm that a soul that gives itself supernaturally, without reserve, to Christ in the person of its neighbor, loves Christ very much and is infinitely loved by Him; it will make great progress in union with our Lord. Whereas, if you meet a soul who frequently gives himself to prayer and yet voluntarily closes himself to the needs of his neighbor, be assured that there is a great deal of illusion in his prayer life. For prayer has no other purpose, in its end, than to submit the soul to the full divine will; but by closing itself to its neighbor, this soul closes itself to Christ, to the most sacred desire of Christ: “That they all may be one, that they may be consummated in one” (Acts 17:22-23). True holiness shines through charity and the total gift of self. If, therefore, we want to remain united to our Lord, it is extremely important to see if we are united to the members of his Mystical Body. Let us be on our guard. The least voluntary coldness, deliberately withheld, against one of our brothers will constitute an obstacle, more or less serious according to its degree, to our union with Jesus. This is why Christ himself tells us that if, at the moment of presenting our offering at the altar, we remember that our brother has something against us, we should leave our

offering there and go first to reconcile with our brother and then return to present our offering (Mt 5:23-24). When we receive communion, we receive the substance of Christ's physical body; we must also receive and accept his Mystical Body. It is impossible for Christ to descend to us and be a principle of union if we retain any resentment against one of his members. St. Thomas calls sacrilegious communion a lie. Why so? Because he who approaches Christ to receive Him in communion, manifests, by the very fact, that he remains united to Him; and, if he is in mortal sin-that is, if he is separated from Christ-the fact of approaching Him constitutes a lie to him. Cf. 3,80,4.

To be united to Christ, to desire union with him, while excluding from our love only one of his members, is to incur a lie; it is to want to divide Christ* We are to receive communion from the one whom St. Augustine calls the "total Christ. "10 Listen to what St. Paul says in this regard: "The cup of blessing, that is, the Eucharistic cup, which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? And the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? Since the bread is one bread, we are many and one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (I Cor. 10:16-17). This is why the great Apostle, who had understood so well and who expounded so vividly the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ, felt great horror at the discord and dissension that reigned among Christians. "I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak alike, and that there be no schisms among you, but that ye be agreed in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor 1:10). And what reason does he give for this? "For as the body, being one, has many members, and

all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For you all, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether servants or free, were baptized into the one Spirit and are the body of Christ and its members, each one in part” (1 Cor 12:12-14 and 27).

Baptismal grace, our incorporation into the Mystical Body of Christ, the natural solidarity that should reign among all the members of the same body: this is the second great title or foundation of fraternal charity, which is binding, in itself, on all Christians without exception. But, in the case of religious, there is still another third foundation, which we will now examine. c)

Religious profession

250. Religious profession, by incorporating them into a new supernatural family within the Mystical Body of Christ, establishes and founds among all the members of this new family a new title, which binds and unites them even more closely than they were already bound together by baptismal grace. To love one’s brothers as oneself,” writes Father Valuy 11, “in relation to God, it would undoubtedly be enough to have with them the same faith, the same sacraments, the same Head, the same spirit, the same pastors, the same life, the same inheritance and the same immortal hopes. But besides these relationships, as close as they are numerous, there are others that reach the highest degree among the different members of the religious family: friendship and fraternity. All have been subjected to the same mold in the novitiate, or rather, all have drunk at the breast of the same mother the same milk of knowledge and piety; all acknowledge for their father the same founder, who has transmitted to them his spirit, and follow the same rules which he traced out for them; all with the same means pursue the same end; all, from morning till night and

throughout their lives, make the same exercises, dwell under the same roof, work, *<< St. Augustine, De imitate Eccles. Cf. Las liríudes del religioso (Barcelona 193$) p.2i3-2i$.

sacrifice, suffer and rejoice, always united. The same interests as among fellow citizens, the same combats as among comrades in arms, the same ancestors and the same treasures as among brothers; communication of thoughts and feelings as among friends. What if Jesus Christ said to the members of the great Christian family: “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you, that ye love one another also. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves” (Acts 13:34-35)* can he not say to the members of the religious family: “This is my own special recommendation: First and foremost, keep mutual charity among yourselves; be one soul in many different bodies; you will be known to be religious and brothers not by the black or white habit you wear, nor by the practice of the same vows and the same virtues, nor by the special ministries entrusted to you by the Church, but by the love you have for one another?“Ah, who will love you if you do not love one another? The world will often accuse you and persecute you. Love one another fraternally, because, as men, you all have the same heavenly Father; love one another saintly, because, as Christians, you all have the same Head; love one another tenderly, because, as religious, you all have the same Founder. If friendship is naturally formed by unity of origin, what must not be the friendship of those who bear the seal of unity in their threefold origin?”

2.

Characteristics of fraternal charity

Concretizing in a multitude of details the principal characteristics that fraternal charity must have among the members of the same institute or religious community, we could point out the following 12: i.° To feel interiorly a great esteem towards all their brothers.

251 As a sister of humility, charity is never puffed up; it cannot subsist on pride, which is the swelling of a soul full of itself; it gladly submits to others, because it knows how to look not only at the qualities of others, but also at its own defects; and when the occasion arises, it gives them signs of this intimate conviction and sincere preference. He is accustomed to always consider his brothers from the favorable side, as one who looks at a picture from its true point of view. Instead of closing her eyes on fifty virtues, in order to fix them on a single imperfection, with no other advantage than that of satisfying her natural malice and attachment to her own relaxations, she closes her eyes on fifty defects in order to fix them on a single virtue, with the double advantage of being edified and of blessing God, the author of every gift. 12 We transfer here the precious observations of Father Valuy in his aforementioned work The Virtues of Religious p. 2.Valuy, which, in their admirable simplicity, are among the best that have been written on this very important subject.

From the moment that an unfavorable thought, or the sight of an apparently reprehensible action, forms a cloud over the reputation of a religious, before the cloud has time to spread, charity hastens to dispel it, saying to herself: What

am I doing? Is it up to me to denigrate in my spirit the image of God and to look for deformities in a member of Jesus Christ? Can my brother not, in spite of this, be endowed with eminent sanctity, even though he is subject to annoying defects, which God has left him in order to humble him and to make him learn mutual tolerance and the exercise of patience?

252* Since outward affection is the sign and fruit of interior esteem, charity honors all those for whom it feels esteem: superiors, equals and inferiors, old and young; it carefully observes the advantages and appreciates the different circumstances of age, employment, merit, character, birth, and education in order to be all things to all. Convinced that it is not unworthy of God to have highly educated men in his service, and that religious should not be respected less than the people of the world, he adapts himself to the rules of good education in everything that is in keeping with religious simplicity. He does not conform himself to those rules of a contrived and disguised politeness, which is only a testimony of apparent benevolence and deceitful respect, but to the rules of that other politeness, the lord of charity, which, manifesting outwardly the sentiments of sincere affection and true abnegation, puts grace in the face, kindness on the lips, affability in the look, sweetness in the words, courtesy, refinement and delicacy in the attentions that one must keep for the other; of that civility, the fruit of abnegation and humility no less than of charity and friendship, which is the art of being self-possessed and self-possessed, without obliging or annoying anyone; taking care to avoid what displeases and to do what may please, in order to keep others satisfied with ourselves and with themselves; in a word: it is a set of discretion, of regard, of cordiality, of words and manners full of gentleness and deference,

3.0 To be of the same feeling as his brothers in the same trade and to study himself so as not to make anyone suffer.

My God, why should we be so attached to our own way of seeing and acting? What! do not all means and all methods lead to the same result, if we use them with prudence and perseverance? My brother has had good success with his method, and so have I with mine; proof that both the one and the other are convenient, and that it is not worth questioning as to which should be employed, scandalizing those we are to edify and perhaps compromising the work of which we are charged. The four beasts of which Daniel speaks gathered their wings together because they were impelled by the same spirit and animated by the same ardor; thus, with swift and majestic flight, they drove the chariot of divine glory. Such is the example that religious should follow: unite your forces and abandon yourselves to the same inspiration. Charity avoids haughty and disdainful gestures: it prevents itself from resentments and manias, and even in the midst of the greatest worries it is always on guard against harshness and rusticity. Attentive not to offend susceptibilities, she neither reviles nor despises those who follow a conduct opposed to her own; to those who are ignorant of something they should know, she teaches it to them as if to remind them of it. The religious animated by fraternal charity is neither one of those susceptible spirits who are offended by nothing, incapable of concealing a lack of consideration or a slight; nor of those fussy spirits who enjoy contradicting, ergotizing and stirring up irritating questions; nor of those independent spirits who set themselves up as supreme arbiters of talent and virtue, and infallible dispensers of praise and censure; nor of those

suspicious spirits who secretly ruminate in their hearts, and consider, as addressed to them, every word that is somewhat piquant or equivocal; nor of those suspicious spirits who secretly ruminate in their hearts, and consider, as addressed to them, every word that is somewhat piquant or equivocal; nor of those discontented spirits who find detestable every country to which they are destined by obedience, every society in whose bosom they live, and who would be capable of going round the world without finding a place or a person to their liking; nor of those imperious spirits who seek to impose their opinions and refuse to adhere to those of others, however just they may be, merely because they have not conceived them, or because they have not been expressed by the former; nor of those mocking and gracious spirits who spare neither the aged nor those who have no understanding of jokes; nor of those great talkers, who, in

instead of taking care to bring out the variety of knowledge of others in preference to their own, as charity and civility demand, they monopolize the conversation, leave no one free to make their judgment, and make mortals find annoyance and displeasure where they thought they were enjoying repose and recreation” 4.0

Accommodate different temperaments.

254. He who is animated by charity patiently and silently, with feelings of humility and meekness, as if he had neither eyes nor ears, endures the most difficult, the most extravagant and the most capricious tempers, even if he sometimes feels these little passions rising up in his heart.

No matter how observant and perfect one may be, is he not always in need of compassion and indulgence? To be suffered, one must suffer others; to be loved, one must love; to be helped, one must help; and to be given pleasure and delight, one must first cause it. In the midst of so many spirits, of so many characters, of so many different interests, how can one live in peace for a single day if one does not know how to condescend, to accommodate oneself, to bend, to yield one's right, to impose privations, to renounce a design, however excellent it may appear, and to take one's eyes off many evils and many defects that one has neither the mission nor the power to avoid? Charity listens to the importunate, answers frivolous questions, renders services in imaginary needs without showing effort or annoyance; it does not ask for exemptions or privileges without real need; fearful of arousing jealousy, it neither multiplies nor prolongs conversations with some when it knows that it overshadows others. She combats natural antipathies and aversions, striving not to let them appear, and even seeks the company of those who are the object of them. He never reproves or warns with a certain kind of bitter zeal, as if he could no longer contain himself. He considers whether by chance he does not also have those faults and defects that offend him in others, or perhaps more considerable, and works to correct them: "If you cannot make yourself as you wish, how can you want to make someone else according to the measure of your desire? We want others to be perfect, and we do not take care to make amends for our faults. We want others to be severely corrected, and we refuse to be corrected. We are ungrateful for excessive condescension towards others, and we do not want to be denied anything we ask for. We want others Religious Life

are restrained according to the statutes, and we do not suffer ourselves to be restrained in the least. Thus it is clear how seldom we love our neighbor as ourselves “13 . 5.0 Not to refuse any reasonable service and to accompany the service or refusal with affable forms.

255. Charity is liberal: it does all it can, and when it does little, it desires to do much. It loses no occasion to console, to give, to sacrifice itself, to take for itself the most painful things, after the example of its divine Author, who came not to be served, but to serve. One religious seems to be suffering: he goes to ask for some relief for himself; another has need or desire for a book, an instrument, any object: he asks permission to obtain it; another is sad, afflicted: he addresses to him, or has words of consolation addressed to him, or has them addressed to him. Without complaining either of the burden or of the negligence of his brothers, he gladly finishes the work that he left unfinished, happy and joyful to diminish the work of others and to increase his own merit. The hunter,” says St. John Chrysostom, “who catches sight of a magnificent game, does he cry out against those who have gone through the forest before him and have not killed it? And the passenger who finds a gold coin on the road, does he not get down to take it, or does he lament that those who have gone before him have not picked it up? “14

It is true that it would be strange to be consumed with an ardent desire to outwardly exercise charity, to make one’s abnegation admired in a hospital or in a school, to ask perhaps the favor of bringing Christianity and civilization to India, and at the same time, at home, in the midst of one’s brothers, to show oneself cold, indifferent, without attention or condescension. There is an art to giving, as there is to denying. Many give, and do not leave obliged, because they give unwillingly; others deny, and do not leave dissatisfied, because they know how to temper and soften the refusal.

Charity possesses this art in its highest degree; but what among the worldly is only art, in her it is virtue, it is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. 6º To take part in the joys and to associate oneself with the sorrows of the brethren.

256. As the soul establishes in the human body a perfect society of pleasures and pains, so in the religious body it does everything together with charity, and so much for the gus13 Kempjs, Imitation of Christ i,r6. *4 St. John Chrysostom, Homii. 8 adv. ludaeos.

He makes that cold word, mine, yours, disappear, as he does for afflictions, no less than for earthly goods. He grieves with his brethren at the trials to which they are subjected, at their sorrows, at their humiliations, at the little success of their works, and he knows how to lavish on them the consolations which, under equal circumstances, he would wish for himself. He rejoices at the esteem and confidence with which they are honored, at the magnificent results of their labor, at the gifts of nature and of grace with which they are adorned; he congratulates them on them and gives thanks to God. If, on the one hand, compassion knows how to soften the sorrows of the one who bears them, making them his own, on the other hand, the part that a friend takes in the joys of another friend, making them his own and personal, doubles them in favor of the friend. It would please God that, instead of this delightful fellowship, the low and creeping vice of envy should never be seen to reign. “But when David returned, after he had slain the Philistine, the women of all the towns and cities of Israel went out to meet King Saul, singing and dancing”.

Today, as then, women are the occasion and object of envy: women’s confidence, women’s praise, women’s gifts. “And in their dances and in their songs the women answered one another, and said, Saul slew a thousand; David slew ten thousand.”

One has the confidence and the vote of almost everyone; the other of almost no one; the one speaks like an angel, the other does not know what he is saying; the one here has with his science enchanted his students, the one there has them extremely displeased. “And Saul was exceedingly angry, and was very displeased at these words.” ¥

He is possessed with a certain fury, and gnashes his teeth at such talk. “They have given,” he says, “to David ten thousand, and to me only a thousand: what do you lack but only the kingdom?”

Everything is given to my brother, and to me nothing: he alone is holy, he alone is learned, he alone is fine; ah, let him take it all to himself, and let him alone be master of the field. “Wherefore from that day forward Saul looked not kindly on David.”

It is concluded and forever; hatred has replaced friendship; brother is abhorred:

“And Saul had a spear and threw it, believing that he could nail David to the wall. “15

The darts of slander, sometimes slander, are hurled; it is reported, revenge is taken, it is necessary to come to the separation, 7.0

Not to be irritated by the injustices of others,

Yes, it is necessary to forgive and to return good for evil, just as God forgave us and made us good for evil by sending us our Lord Jesus Christ. The violet is trodden in vain; it never lifts up its head haughtily, and only by the softness of its perfume does the one who treads on it know its existence. For there you have a picture of charity. It labors to persuade itself that there has been nothing but a mistake, an inadvertence, at most a very slight malice. If an explanation is deemed necessary, she goes ahead and accuses herself of having given rise to the incident. She never keeps in her heart any feeling against her brother, and does everything possible to prevent her brother from keeping it in his. Signs of contempt, ingratitude, rudeness, gossip, demands, grievances: he excuses everything. Cassian makes mention of a religious who, having received a great slap from his abbot in the presence of more than two hundred brothers, did not let out a complaint nor even changed color. St. Gregory praises another religious who, when he was beaten with a broom by his abbot, attributed the incident not to the passion of the superior, but to his own fault. And he adds that the humility and patience of the disciple served as a lesson to the master.

And certainly it will not be of mediocre weight in the scales of Him who so accurately weighs the merit that charity which, working not to give to suffer, patiently suffers everything, not once, but all his life, every day and at all times; That charity which is all the more necessary inasmuch as the religious, unable to distance himself from the one who bothers him and keeps his thoughts from him, is obliged to live in the same house, often in the same job, next to characters most opposed to his own; that charity, finally, which, considered in little here below because it is exercised only in things of little importance, and more demanded than

admired, is less exposed to vainglory and retains before God all its value. 15 Cf. 1 Sam 18:6-11.

8º To ask forgiveness when we have had the misfortune of offending someone, humbly confessing our fault or error.

Charity knows nothing of recriminations, epithets, dry replies, bitter reproofs, bitter words and pungent or derisive words. The comparison of St. John Chrysostom is beautiful: “There are those who overwhelm you with insults; shut your mouths, for if you open them, you will only increase the storm. You are in a room, between two open doors that a hurricane wind shakes with a roar; close one of them quickly, and at once the noise will cease, and the current of air will lose all its impetuosity. That is your position before the one who vomits insults against you; your mouth and his are two open doors that give the wind free passage; close yours, and the squall will cease immediately. If by misfortune you open it, the tempest will be furious, and who knows when it will subside” 16.

If any living word has escaped, humble yourself before God: “The tongue has over the other members of the body,” says St. Gertrude, “the privilege of being the depository of the precious mysteries of Jesus Christ. He who receives Jesus Christ without doing penance for the faults committed by means of the tongue, is like the one who, gathering stones on the threshold of his house, stones his friend on his arrival”.

Moreover, in order to remain moderate and not to give others occasion not to be so, it is necessary to remember that all men have their fvorite passion, their extravagance of

genius or of heart, their system of fixed ideas, which are not allowed to be touched with impunity. When one string is missing from an instrument, the others vibrate: there is no harmony. The same thing happens in us: on the other points, all is well; our opinion and our will are in conformity with the opinion and the will of our brothers; but touch the weak fiber, touch the passion, the system: the instrument does not give its sound, and in vain you will look for the string that should produce it. Surround the sick, the weak, the aged, the aged, the guests and the newcomers with care and hospitality.

259* i. To the sick and the weak. Charity wants to visit them, to flatter them, to anticipate their needs and, as far as possible, to spare them the anxiety of feeling them and the humiliation of begging for relief. Bossuet said to the Ursuline nuns of Meaux: “Love the sick, love them, respect them, honor them as consecrated by the anointing of the cross and marked with the character of Jesus Christ who suffers. 16 St. John Chrysostom,

In epist. ad Thess. V hom.i 1.

2° To the elderly. Charity honors them at every juncture, conforms to their feelings, consults them, anticipates their wishes, spares them sorrows, and does not propose to reform what cannot be reformed. 3.0 To guests and newcomers. He welcomes them fraternally, as he would wish to be welcomed. He multiplies the testimonies of adhesion and affection to those who leave, trying not to say or do anything that could hurt their hearts, usually so susceptible, making them think that they are getting rid of them. It is necessary that at all times the religious can bless, love and show gratitude to religion as to a good mother; but religion

is not an abstract being, it is composed of individuals in mutual solidarity with each other. Ah! The elderly and the sick very easily believe that they are considered as a heavy burden, and, as they say, as useless furniture, even though they are the ones who, after having spent their strength in the service of religion, still pray and do penance for the community, deflect the scourges, attract graces, perhaps merit the perseverance of many whose vocation wavers, transmit to the young the traditions and the spirit of the Institute, practice and make them practice a thousand acts of virtue. Did our Lord Jesus Christ work less effectively for the Church when he suffered on the cross than when he evangelized? It is necessary, then, to do for the sick and the suffering elderly what we would have wished to do for the agonized and crucified Jesus Christ. Pray much for our deceased brethren and for our living brethren who are most in need. 260. “We do not remember enough of our dead, of our deceased,” said St. Francis de Sales, “and the proof is that we speak little of them. We flee from these discourses as from dismal conversations; we let the dead bury the dead; together with the sound of the bells, their memory ceases in us, without thinking that the friendship that ends with death was never true. It is a sign of piety to remember the good qualities of the deceased, which has, in addition, the advantage of stimulating their imitation”.

In communities distinguished by fraternal charity and family spirit, the deceased are often spoken of, their virtues and services are praised, some of their maxims and words are extolled, and some of their edifying manuscripts are published and circulated. And who is the religious who, on hearing the name of his deceased confrere, does not address to

Does not God pray for him from the bottom of his heart, and does he not apply some of his good works to his gift? Charity also prays for the most needy, known only to God; for those whose constancy can move or whom violent temptations put on the edge of the abyss; it opens up souls closed in on themselves, giving them, or making them give them for it, consolations and advice; Can there be anything more pleasing to God, more useful to the Church and more meritorious for the individual than to preserve in this way in God's dearest children peace, joy, love of vocation, the union of the subjects among themselves and with the superior? And the most positive advantage that we find in religion, is it not that of not being abandoned either during life or after death, of finding a heart that sympathizes with our sorrows, a hand that supports us in danger or lifts us up after the fall? r r. To take a lively interest in the whole order, in its works, in its successes, in its setbacks,

The religious who lives in the family spirit would like to be ignorant of nothing that concerns all the things of his order: he delights in reading the annals; he gladly takes up his pen to contribute to the edification and to satisfy the legitimate curiosity of his brothers; he blesses God for the pleasant news that is transmitted, and weeps and grieves at persecutions, at the emptiness caused by death and, above all, at the scandalous desertions. He who concentrates only on what he does, as if everything else did not deserve his attention; he who is indifferent to the actions of his brothers, speaking of them with lukewarmness and even with envy, as if he wanted to do everything by himself or as if all that would diminish the glory of what he does, would he not show that he is seeking himself and that, to the little love he has for the Church, he adds the great indifference he feels for his order? Uniting himself by charity, by the vows he

makes and by the interest he takes in all the good of the order, he also associates himself, at the same time, to the merit he brings; in a certain way he participates in the gifts^ and exercises the functions of each member; he is at once eye, hand, tongue, foot, and his only desire is to obtain great successes through the cooperation and work of his members.

brothers, or rather, it is like the soul that presides over everything and to which nothing is foreign in the body that animates. 12. To edify oneself with a view to the virtues of one’s brethren and to edify them at the same time with a view to one’s own virtues.

262. He takes advantage of their work in order to make them take advantage of his own work; he receives from all in order to give to all, taking from one humility, from another obedience, from this one union with God, from that one the practice of mortification; he gathers in himself the gifts of grace distributed among all the members of the community, in order to return them soon to all by a happy commerce and by an admirable exchange. Like the bee in a garden, it forms its honey from the most exquisite juice that it has drawn from the calyx of all the flowers. Like the painter, it studies the principal works of the great masters in order to appropriate and reproduce the best features in the pictures which in turn are to serve as models. Like the mirror placed in the most suitable point for reflection, it receives the reflection of a thousand other mirrors arranged around it, in order to return them in a single beam multiplied and dazzling. Happy is the community whose members esteem and love one another, admire and imitate one another in all

that is good in them, by this multiple reproduction and by this simultaneous and at the same time successive generation of virtues, exercising on one another the unceasing and sublime ministry of mutual edification and reciprocal sanctification. 3.

Obstacles to fraternal charity

Let us now point out the main obstacles that fraternal charity may encounter on its way, preventing or hindering its full expansion and development. a)

The diversity of temperaments and characters

263. Religious communities are constituted and formed by a multitude of members coming from the most diverse regions and endowed with the most varied personal characteristics. Their education, culture, temperament, character, tastes and interests, etc., are very different from one another. In these conditions it is very difficult for fraternal charity not to encounter a multitude of obstacles and stumbling blocks in order to be exercised properly and with perfection, unless one is always very vigilant and alert so as not to be surprised by the enemy.

Among the greatest obstacles to the preservation of harmony and fraternity in a community," writes a contemporary author,17 "is the diversity of characters, with their consequent defects. It is an arduous but absolutely indispensable task for every religious to correct his defects in order to avoid clashes with others. The main ones are the following: 1. The proud character, which thinks only of itself, makes everything redound to itself and always tends to

elevate itself and to procure its own well-being. 2. The envious character, which suffers for the talent and the good successes of others, which it tries to lower in any way. 3. The frivolous character, which dwells on the surface of things, fiery in futilities and cold in serious problems. 4. The careless character, which takes nothing with interest, not even that which looks to the glory of God and the prosperity of the community. $. The indiscreet character, who wants to know the why and how of things, asks questions that do not concern him, speaks without rhyme or reason, and wants to hear everything. 6. The siisceptií)íí character, which sees everything darkly, misinterprets everything, takes everything upside down. 7. The timid character, which believes it is incapable of everything and fails only for fear of failure. 8. The sensitive and delicate character, which takes meticulous care of its health, complaining to everyone about the slightest discomfort and the most insignificant discomfort. 9. The hypocondric, dreamy and gloomy character, which sees evil everywhere, is unbearable to itself and to others. 10. The independent character, which in everything and for everything wants to be the arbiter of its own conduct, does everything at its own whim and does not tolerate any observation whatsoever. 11. The original character, which has ideas and ways of thinking, speaking and acting that are opposed to others. 12. The violent and impatient character, which cannot stand contradiction or waiting, and manifests itself with brusque and unpleasant gestures. 13. The reconcentrated character, that in everything and for everything walks with dissimulations, always follows oblique ways. 14. The inconstant character, which often changes its conduct, advice and direction: it wants today what it will not want tomorrow, it is always restless, and therefore incapable of progress, be it scientific or pious. 15. The sympathetic character, which is always on the lookout for something to which it can become sensibly attached, which, if not remedied in time, can be the cause of

the most disastrous evils. 16. The enraptured character, which questions everything and never ceases to criticize everything that is said and everything that is known. 17. The visionary character, which, impelled by pride, induces to walk along extraordinary paths, disdaining the beaten ones; it aspires to elevated knowledge and celestial communications; it believes, with a great deal of levity, the illusions of the exalted imagination and the lying inspirations of Satan. 18. The lazy character, which does not know how to do violence to itself and does everything slowly and sluggishly. 17 Alberto E. Ariza, O. P., note to chapter 14 of the book El ideal dominicano, by Fr. Turcotte, O. P. (ed. Bogotá 1950) p.2ió-2r7.

In order to know and correct our defects of character we must be humble to seek the appropriate advice and accept it, constantly asking God for his grace without ever being discouraged by relapses. b) - The treatment of persons foreign to the order.

264. Special care should be taken not to fail in the charity due to the brothers in religion or to the Order in general when the need or convenience arises to deal with persons who are strangers to the Order, either directly and personally (visits, trips, etc.) or through epistolary correspondence. One should never utter a single word that, from near or far, could in the least harm the reputation of a religious or of the Order in general. Small or great family secrets must be kept under lock and key, without ever bringing them to public light or exposing them to the impudent gaze of those who would gladly air them in order to denigrate the religion or any of its members. It is

impossible that in religious houses less edifying events do not sometimes occur, since the religious habit does not suppress human weakness and frailty; but, far from entrusting these weaknesses to strangers under the pretext of finding relief and relief from one's own pain, we must carefully hide them from the gaze of all those who cannot offer the appropriate remedy. To bring the dirty linen of one's own house into the public light, even under the pretext of asking for advice or of venting one's sorrow, is one of the vilest and most shameful faults that can be committed against fraternal charity. c)

The bad example of others

265* Sometimes, unfortunately, we will find in the conduct of a bad religious an obstacle or stumbling block to the exercise of fraternal charity. Criticism, murmuring, insidious suspicions and a thousand other such miseries are not entirely banished from religious cloisters. Some," writes Valuy in this regard, "by imprudence or under the influence of an exalted and impressionable imagination that takes everything to the extreme (I dare not say by wickedness), can make themselves guilty of injustices that cry out to heaven and ruin a religious. What is not true they take for indubitable; what is no more than a conjecture they take as the basis of the gravest suppositions. Some facts that, taken in isolation, would hardly constitute a peccadillo, they group them together and make a mountain out of a few grains of sand. Acts which, taken as a whole, would be worthy of great praise, they truecate them in such a way that they do not 18 O.c. p.*59-260 and 265-*67.

but on the unfavorable side. Enemies of the positive, they lavish superlatives; and when they have only one or two testimonies, they resort to the impersonal it is said, it is told, making believe that it is a universal rumor.... When an equal is seen to be lacking in charity, he must be called to order. If saying or doing something that can be a cause of scandal is the first of the sins opposed to charity, not to stop, when one can, the one who speaks or does wrong, is not the second? When one has heard some imprudent word, one should observe three recommendations made by the saints: 1. a Do not repeat anything. There are those who amuse themselves in making the mud jump, when it passes; instead of receiving it in my bosom, or depositing it in the bosom of another, I shake the garment, and if I cannot stop the inattentive one, at least I warn the passengers to be careful. To the fault committed by my brother, entrusting me with the secret fetus, why should I add another, entrusting it to another who will want to enjoy the same privilege? Will I be like that fool who, as the son of Sirach says, is as powerless to prevent a murmuring as a woman is to hold back the child that escapes from her womb? And if something healthy remains after the murmuring, why should I conclude to infame it all? 2. a To have as a maxim, like the bishop of Atniéns, to believe all the good that one hears; and to believe only the evil that one sees. Malignity does the contrary; for the good it demands proofs, for the evil it is content with the slightest appearances, when no one ignores that of the thousand gossips that are told, scarcely one is found entirely faithful in the background and in the circumstances. As for such stories, it is a rule of prudence for superiors to discard half, to discuss with precision the other half, always distrusting half of what remains: what will be the rule of charity of the subjects? When the action is obviously reprehensible, let us suppose rectitude of intention or the least malice, even if among a hundred imaginable intentions only one praiseworthy one can be

found, leaving the judgment to God, who has reserved for himself the discernment of the heart. To attribute the fault to hallucination, to inadvertence, to the violence of temptation, to human frailty. Do not deduce from the past what is present, nor from the present what is to come, nor from an act the conduct in general, or the background of the character. Never say: “It is incorrigible: it is so, it will always be so”. Everything must be expected from grace, from efforts, from time. 3. a To erase, as far as possible, the bad impression produced in the spirit, since something always remains of slander. In all the grades of the hierarchical scale and in all the countries in which the Order is established, by the mere fact of having had an accusation against a religious at any time of his life, he is infamous, judged without appeal and in an irrevocable manner. The opinion that has been formed of him goes from mouth to mouth; and just as he leaves it in the place from which he leaves, he finds it in the place to which he goes, paralyzing that opinion, to a great extent, the good that he could have done to his brothers in his relations with them, and to the people of the world in the exercise of his zeal. A story based only on probabilities was enough to tarnish a reputation that can no longer regain its luster in spite of all the apologies. The detractor has been believed in evil, with no other caution than the audacity he showed in his affirmations, and he will not be believed in good, even on his oath. Who does not know that evil is always on the rise and good on the fall?

4.

The great models of charity

Any member of any religious institute can look at himself as in a mirror in the three great models of charity that can be offered to his eyes: God, Christ and the founder of his order.
a)

God

266. The depth, extent and delicacy of God's charity for mankind is admirable. Let us listen once more to Father Valuy 1 "Let us outline in broad strokes the charity of God toward us, in order to stir us up to fraternal charity. After having had us present in his thoughts from eternity, from nothing he called us to life. He himself, with his own hands, formed and organized the body of man, animated it with the breath of his mouth, enclosing in it an immortal soul created in his image. Just at the threshold of life, we have found an officer of his court, an angel charged with protecting us, accompanying us and leading us in triumph to our inheritance. What a magnificent palace he has built for us! What a prodigious variety of fruits, flowers and animals he has placed at our service! We fell, and he came to raise us up; we deserved hell, and he sent his Son to open heaven for us. The Word became flesh: he took a body like ours, thus ennobling and divinizing our humanity. Before returning to his Father, after immolating himself for us on the cross, not wanting to leave us orphans, he wished to dwell among us in the Eucharist, to nourish us with his flesh and to infuse his divine spirit into our hearts, as a living promise and a foretaste of the happiness and glory that he would prepare for us in his kingdom. Truly, my God, you treat us not only with paternal love, but with infinite respect and honor, and can I not love and honor those whom you have loved and honored in this way? How fitting are these thoughts to inflame my charity with the flame of your own!I am among brothers, like me, children of God and members of Jesus Christ! My brothers have an angel who smiles with my

angel! One day my brothers will be in heaven, and with them I will be and I too will sing! A few moments ago we were together at the holy table; tomorrow we will be together again!" b)

Jesus Christ

267. "Let us also admire," continues Father Valuy 20, "the charity of the Savior, who went through the world doing good. If wine is lacking at a wedding, if fishermen have worked uselessly all night, if entire villages do not know where to find food in the desert, if they are tormented by the evil spirit or if unfortunate beings cannot make use of their limbs, if death has taken a daughter from her father, an only son from a widow, a brother tenderly loved by two sisters, Jesus is there to provide all that is lacking, to restore all that has been lost, to apply balm to all pains. 19 O.c. p.241-243. 20 O.c. p. 243-245.

Sometimes he anticipates the request, shouting from afar; you are healed. At other times he asks for what is desired: "Do you want to be healed?" He does not make you wait; for this he encourages the faith that is wavering. Ordinarily it goes beyond need and desire. It is necessary to interrupt the meal, to leave the solitude, to make long journeys; soon Jesus is there. Nicodemus, suspicious and timid, goes to look for him at night; Jesus does not hesitate to sacrifice sleep and to prolong the conference with him. The Samaritan woman, changing her conversation, begins to discuss a point of the Law; Jesus satisfies her desire, although he is tired from the journey. The children gather around him to receive his caresses; Jesus lavishes them on them. The crowd

is too numerous for one to stand before the hand that heals by touching or blessing; he makes an omnipotent virtue come out of himself, and the fringe of his garment supplements his word to his gesture. With what a charming grace he knows how to accompany the benefit! “Zacchaeus, come down quickly; I want to lodge in your house today”. Who could have surpassed him in the art of providing pleasant surprises? In his appearances to the Magdalene, to the holy women, to the disciples of Emmaus, did he not pay well, to the one his tears and his perfumes, to the others his aromas, and to the latter the hospitality they offered him? Who will not be moved to tears, seeing him prepare for himself on the beach and serve with his own hands the food of his apostles? Hearing him say to Peter three times, to make him make public reparation for his triple denial: “Peter, do you love me?” Did he not show infinite tenderness when-as St. Clement says, who assures us that he heard it from the lips of St. Peter himself-he watched over his disciples during their sleep and rendered them the services that a mother renders to her children? O Jesus, the meekest, the most loving, the most charitable of the sons of men, make me a partaker of your love? make me partake of your meekness, of your love and of your charity”. c)

The founder of the order himself

268. Most of the ancient religious orders and congregations were founded by saints canonized by the Church. In any case, God does not usually grant the grace of founding a religious institute except to souls who are closely united to him by the bonds of ardent charity. In the writings of the Founder and in the biographical sketches of his life, the religious will undoubtedly find a thousand traits of the exquisite charity that pervaded his soul. The religious should always fix his attention on them and not on the less edifying examples that he may receive, perhaps, from his

present superiors. Let us never forget that our present superiors are our legitimate superiors, and in this sense we will never venerate and honor them too much. But it is one thing to be a superior and quite another to be a model. Our superiors are our superiors, but not our models. These are only God, Jesus Christ and, in any case, the holy Founder or Foundress, who will never give us a bad example and whose exquisite charity the religious should strive to imitate.

Chapter 8

EL

SPIRIT

DE

FE

269. One of the most indispensable conditions for attaining Christian perfection in any state or kind of life, but especially in the religious state, is to strive continually to live in a supernatural atmosphere, guided in everything by the light of faith and not by mere human reasons. Christians and even religious are legion, unfortunately, who are guided almost exclusively by the lights of simple natural reason and adjust their conduct to purely natural and human motives. They are very far from being just in the profound sense that this word has in Sacred Scripture, since, according to Scripture, the just person lives by faith (Hebr 10:38) and scrupulously conforms his thought and conduct to it. The fundamental principles by which a soul is governed and governs itself give rise to the different kinds of spirits, that is, to the different styles or ways of conducting oneself in practice. Such diversity, in fact, has its origin in the different habitual ways of knowing and judging all things. Thus: a) He who is accustomed to judge everything by purely natural reasons is said to have or to be dominated by the human spirit. This spirit can offer two distinct modes within its own sphere: if it is governed solely by merely sensory knowledge and appetite, it leads a sensual life and justly deserves the label ammaiis homo, which St. Paul attributes to it (cf. 1 Cor

2:14); if it is accustomed to judge according to its simple natural reason, it leads a merely natural life and deserves the nickname natura/is homo, which coincides with a rationalism or practical naturalism, which has nothing to do with supernatural order and life. b) He who is accustomed to see and judge everything in the light of faith, that is, for supernatural reasons and motives, is said to work in the dii/ino way, because the light of faith is a certain participation of the science of God in us that makes us judge and act according to God. This is the one who has the spirit of faith and is called just in Sacred Scripture.

The Council of Trent teaches that “faith is the principle of human salvation, the foundation and root of all justification, without which it is impossible to please God and to reach the fellowship of his children” (D 801). And the masters of the spiritual life are unanimous in affirming that faith is the positive foundation of perfection and holiness. Let us examine what the spirit of faith consists of, its great efficacy before God and the principal obstacles that oppose it to the spirit of faith, and the main obstacles to it.

C.8. The spirit of faith

i.

399

What does the spirit of faith consist of?

The spirit of faith consists in having such a lively and profound conviction of the truths revealed by God that it causes us to live continually in a supernatural atmosphere, making us lose, so to speak, the instinct of the human in order to be guided in everything by the instinct of the divine. Just as our soul is the vital principle of our body, the spirit of faith is the principle that informs all the activities of

the soul that possesses it. The spirit of faith is not only translated into a few passing acts, even if they are very frequent; it consecrates the whole of the Christian's life, making the spirit of Jesus Christ circulate in all his thoughts, words, actions and affections, taking hold of his whole being, penetrating it and transforming it. When we allow ourselves to be led and directed by this divine breath, we are truly children of God, according to the oracle of St. Paul: "Those who are moved by the Spirit of God are children of God" (Rom 8:14). The man of faith, the just man, the child of God, is animated by the Holy Spirit, who is the spirit of Jesus Christ. It is no longer man who lives, it is Christ who lives in him (cf. Gal 2:20). It is Christ himself who thinks^ speaks and works in him. What dignity, what merit, what holiness that of the man of faith! Separated from the spirit that vivifies it and makes it work in holiness, faith is a body without a soul, a dead faith, as the Apostle James insistently repeats (Iac 2:17,20,26). 270.

To live by faith means to look at all things, natural and supernatural, as God himself sees them, from God's point of view, which is known to us by divine revelation. It is to consider honors and reproaches, poverty and riches, pleasures and sufferings, etc., not in the light of our poor reason or of the false maxims of the world, but in the infallible light of revealed truth, which makes us see and judge all things as God himself sees and judges them. From which we must conclude that, if the simple possession of faith is common among Christians, the spirit of faith is unfortunately very rare even among religious. If we had no faith, we would do nothing for our sanctification; but if we had a living faith, would we do as little as we do? If we had no faith, we would never go to communion; but if we had a living faith, would our communions be so cold and distracted in the midst of the flames of the heart of Christ?

The spirit of faith sanctifies us inwardly, putting truth into our thoughts, holiness into our affections, and merit into our actions, however insignificant they may be in themselves. 271. a) It puts truth into our thoughts. St. Peter compares faith to a “lamp shining in a place of light

The day dawns and the daystar rises in our hearts” (2 Petr. 1:19). When the great day of eternity dawns, its shining light will absorb the light of faith, because it is of lesser intensity; but until that day comes we remain in darkness. What would happen to a man who had to walk in the middle of the night without any light along a path lined with precipices? Sometimes he would take the shadows for realities, trembling where there was nothing to fear, and at other times he would advance calmly and confidently to the edge of an abyss, plunging into it when he thought he had set foot on a firm and safe place. This is the sad image of a great number of Christians and of imperfect religious, whose wavering faith hardly radiates a few pale reflections on the path they tread. It is not strange that they suffer so many falls and live with so much spiritual blindness. Some come to consider as a good what in reality is an evil, and rejoice when they should weep. How different from those who always carry in their hands the torch of faith and are guided by its divine clarity! They are sheltered from all error in matters of salvation. They appreciate all things for what they are really worth and see them as they really are, because they see them in the divine light and, so to speak, with the very eyes of God. 272, b) Sanctifies our affections. Since it is the intelligence that produces feelings in the heart-ignoti nulla cupido, no one desires the unknown-if our knowledge, united by faith to that of God, partakes of his infallible truth, our feelings, springing from the same source as his, will partake of his infinite holiness. We will love what He loves

and precisely because He loves it; we will despise what He despises, *etc.* Love and hatred, fear and desires, all will be in us in perfect order. This is why faith purifies the heart (Acts 15:9) and sanctifies it, while at the same time preserving the spirit from all harmful errors. Faith reveals to us the nothingness of creatures and separates our affection from them; it makes us glimpse the all of God and makes us fond of this supreme Good, in which all our spiritual health consists. We can say with the royal prophet David in the truest of senses: “The Lord is my light and my salvation” (Ps 26:1). 273 c) It makes all our actions meritorious. The spirit of faith makes meritorious all our actions, however small and insignificant they may be in themselves. For actions are produced by thoughts and affections and,

For this reason, they receive all their value from the principle from which they spring: “If the root is holy, so are the branches” (Rom 11:16), St. Paul admirably highlights the difference between two Christians, one of whom is guided by faith in all his conduct and the other follows only the movements of his nature* The foundation of their works, as Christians, is the same, since “no one can lay any other foundation than that which is already laid, which is Jesus Christ” (I Cor 3:11). But while the man of faith builds his building on this divine foundation with the richest materials, gold, silver, precious stones, the other uses only wood, hay and light straw in his fragile construction. What a magnificent reward awaits the former, and what a desolate disappointment awaits the latter! The justice of God, like a devouring fire, will test these works. Those of faith and charity will shine like gold that has passed through the crucible; but nothing will remain of those that had no other

motive than nature and vanity: “In its day the fire will reveal and prove what was the work of each one. He whose work survives will receive the reward, and he whose work is consumed will suffer harm” (1 Cor 3:13-14).

Everything is meritorious in the life of the just, precisely because he lives by faith. If he prays, it is in the spirit of faith; if he speaks, if he reads, if he writes, it is in the spirit of faith; if he nourishes his body or gives some rest to his intelligence, it is always in the spirit of faith. All the events of life, pleasant or painful: health, sickness, honor, contempt…, everything is directed by him to the term of faith. And so the treasure of his merits increases unceasingly: all his works are works of sanctification, precisely because they all come from faith. 2.

Effectiveness of the spirit of faith

274. A religious who values according to his own weakness the great difficulties he must overcome in order to attain perfection will inevitably become disheartened. But he will be revived and filled with confidence if he considers the enormous strength that he can find in the spirit of faith authentically lived. Is there any obstacle in the matter of sanctification that a man who can do everything before the heart of God and before his own heart cannot triumph over? On God, to obtain from Him all the necessary help and assistance; on himself, to determine to make all the sacrifices that grace asks of him, however great and costly they may be. Now it is quite certain that this twofold power is linked to the spirit of faith.

275* a) Omnipotence over the heart of God. Jesus Christ has solemnly and formally promised that nothing will ever be denied to prayer animated by a living faith. Let us listen to His words and have faith in Him: “Truly I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do the fig tree, but if you say to this mountain, ‘Be thou removed and be thou cast into the sea,’ it will be

I would do. Whatever you ask in faith in prayer, you will receive” (Mt 21:21-22). “Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you. For he who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. For which of you is there who, if his son asks for bread, gives him a stone, or if he asks for a fish, gives him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good things to your children, [how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!” (Mt 7:7-11).

To these words of Christ, not often meditated upon but heard a thousand times, let us add those of the Apostle James, inspired by the Holy Spirit: “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, not wavering in anything, for he who wavers is like the waves of the sea, tossed by the wind and tossed to and fro. Let such a man not think that he will receive anything from God” (Lk 1:5-7).

Let us look at the apostle’s reasoning: if our prayer is made with wavering faith, it is in vain: it will obtain nothing from God. On the other hand, it is absolutely infallible if we pray with living faith, without wavering in anything: nihil haesitans. God, our Father, desires nothing so much as to fill us with his graces and blessings. Infinitely rich, he has promised everything to prayer. And yet, how many prayers

turn out to be useless and sterile! This is a serious problem, but it has an easy solution: do we meet the conditions to which the infallible efficacy of prayer is linked? Are we men of defe viva, who ask for the graces they need without the slightest hesitation: nihil haesitans? We know perfectly well what conditions prayer must meet in order to rise up to God and do sweet violence to his omnipotent heart: respect, humility, attention, fervor, perseverance2 But all these qualities are evidently summed up in the formula of the Apostle James, learned from Christ himself: “Ask with living faith, without wavering in anything”. Let us believe, indeed, in the presence, holiness and infinite 2 The Angelic Doctor points out the following conditions for the infallible efficacy of prayer: i.a, that we ask for ourselves (our neighbor could refuse the grace we ask for him); 2.a, things necessary for salvation; 3.a, piously, and 4*S perseveringly <cf. 2-2,83,15 ad 2).

greatness of the adorable Master to whom we address our prayer; let us think of our nothingness before Him, of our unworthiness as sinners, and it will not be necessary to say to ourselves: lower yourselves, humble yourselves to the dust of the earth; and the external respect of our body will be but the faithful expression of the profound religiosity with which our soul will be filled. Let us have faith in the sovereign importance of the business we deal with God; and our spirit, however light it may be, will be overwhelmed, captivated, fixed, by the seriousness of it. Our prayer will no longer be the trifling homage of our lips, but will rise up from our heart like the flame of a blazing fire. Would it be possible to ask with coldness a thing so terribly serious as this, “Deliver us, O Lord, from eternal damnation, and place us

among your elect”? 3 Let us believe in the promises of Him who is the eternal Truth. Let us be firmly convinced that Jesus Christ did not utter empty words when he said: “Ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you”; and whatever the test to which he wants to submit our constancy, let us not cease to ask and we will end up obtaining by our holy importunity what seemed to refuse us at the beginning of our prayer (cf. What a great truth it is that faith is that which prays-fides orat, says St. Augustine-and which gives to prayer that victorious power to which God himself deigns to submit his own divine omnipotence! The miracles worked by our Savior are the most splendid proof of this. He always granted them to the faith of those who asked him for them: “When Jesus saw the faith of those men, he said to the paralytic, ‘Have faith, son’” (Mt 9:23). When Jesus heard him, he marveled and said to those who followed him, “Truly I tell you, I have not found such faith in any man of Israel…” (Mt 9:23). Let it be done to you as you have believed” (Mt 8:10-13). “O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done to you as you wish” (Mt 15:28). “Why are you afraid, O ye of little faith?” (Mt 8:26). “Why are you so timid, have you not yet faith?” (Me 4:40). “Then he touched their eyes, saying, ‘Let it be done to you according to your faith’” (Mt 9:29). “Do not be afraid, have faith alone” (Me 5:36), “Yes, you can! All things are possible to him who believes” (Me 9:23).

There is no doubt about it. Living faith is capable of moving mountains and obtaining from God whatever grace is asked of it, 3 Prayer from the canon of the Mass: AI> aeterna damnatione ríos eripe, et in electprum tuorum iubeas grege numeran.

however great and impossible it may seem; provided, of course, that it is for the greater glory of God and the good of souls. 276”

b)

Omnipotence over the heart of man.

The immense gift of living faith and the treasures of grace that it brings with it would be completely useless if we did not faithfully correspond to its divine demands. But how can this indispensable fidelity be obtained from us? Once again, by living faith itself. For it works so powerfully on our will that it lifts us above ourselves and makes us go beyond the frontiers of the impossible. What could be more fascinating than the motives that living faith presents to us? Sometimes it drags us in fear, and its threats are so terrible that they are enough to subdue and enchain our passions. An enemy God, an avenging God, a reprobate death, an eternal hell: how can we not tremble with fear? And to escape such a dreadful fate, how can we not find sweet the sorrows of a virtuous life, the austerities of penance? At other times, living faith encourages us and stimulates us with Christian hope, whose certainty lacks nothing, nor does it lack the magnificence of its promises. Torrents of delights, a kingdom of glory, a happiness that will leave nothing to be desired, nothing to be feared. At the sight of such a prospect, the heart is inflamed, and we forget all the toils and hardships of the way, and turn our attention only to the blessed term. The same must be said of other generous sentiments that living faith inspires in us. That is why, in the great triumphs obtained by the saints of the Old Law, St. Paul praises only the firmness and vivacity of their faith (cf. Hebr 11). And if we look at St. Paul himself, what wonders of courage and magnanimity did living faith not work in him! From the beginnings of the Church to our own day, what sublime

virtues and what heroic behavior living faith has produced in the best Christians! Is the history of the apostles, of the martyrs, of the virgins, of all the saints, anything other than the history of weakness triumphing gloriously through the strength and energy of faith? It is the living faith that sustained so many Christians in delicate circumstances in which a wrong step would have precipitated them into the abyss; it was she who determined so many others to break the bonds of flesh and blood, to run in all freedom to conquer heaven for themselves and for their brothers. All the great sacrifices, all the immolations of self that we attribute to that energetic love of God, and all the sacrifices that we attribute to that energetic love of God.

Let us attribute them above all to faith, which is the principle of hope and love. Let us stop pleading our weakness in order to palliate our weakness and cowardice. We have in living faith, if we want to make use of it, all that we need to overcome the world with its seductions and allurements, the flesh with its softness and flattery, and the devil with his fallacies and deceptions. In spite of the counterweight of our innumerable miseries, we can rise by living faith to the highest summit of perfection and holiness, always counting on the omnipotent help of God, who himself will infallibly reach us. 3*

Obstacles against the spirit of faith

. The principal obstacles to the full development of the spirit of faith in a believing soul are three: thoughtlessness, the spirit of the world, and one’s own natural inclinations. 277*
a) Thoughtlessness. We have learned from St. Paul that faith

is to the just man what the soul is to man: his very life. It is the life of the intellect, because of the truth with which it enlightens it; the life of the heart, because of the sentiments of righteousness which it brings forth in it; the life of works, because it makes them worthy of eternal life. But in order that it may produce such happy effects, it is necessary that living faith really act on the spirit, on the heart, and on works. But thoughtlessness greatly weakens and even entirely destroys this precious influence. Tertullian says that faith is an abbreviated knowledge of all that is most stimulating and compelling. What more compelling, indeed, than a heaven to be won, a hell to be avoided, an immortal soul to be saved! What could be more moving than a God who loves men to the point of becoming incarnate, living and dying for them; than a God made victim and commanding us to eat his flesh and drink his divine blood! Do these ineffable mysteries not have enough fire to melt the ice of our hearts and burn us with gratitude and love? What impression can these great truths, however sublime they may be, make on our hearts if we do not make them present to our spirit by the most attentive and profound reflection?

Sacred Scripture compares faith to a shield or breastplate and to a sword (Eph 6:16-17). But the shield or breastplate protects only the one who covers himself with it, and the sword is useless if we do not take it out of its sheath to repel the enemy. It is not the virtue of faith itself as a habit, but its exercise and putting into action that gives it all its strength and merit. But, ordinarily, what impels faith to translate itself into works is reflection. Every Christian believes in eternity, but only the reflective Christian continually asks

himself: “What does this profit for eternity?” This explains why the very word of God, whose efficacy was for the saints more penetrating than a two-edged sword (cf. Hebr 4:12), becomes for us almost a dead letter. The saints meditated on it continually, and we never deepen it; they lived in perpetual recollection, and we continually pour ourselves out. We let faith remain in our spirit as a fact without consequences. Only from time to time do we consider the great truths that it proposes to us; but in the manner of a light-hearted man who casts a passing and superficial glance at a mirror and immediately forgets what he has seen (cf. Iac 1:23-24). 278. b) The spirit of the world. We all suffer its influence, perhaps without realizing it. Reason and temporal well-being: these are the idols of our age. Rationalism and the spirit of the world have succeeded in penetrating even into the piety of our days. Unless we constantly recall the judgments of Jesus Christ, in radical contrast to those of the world, we will often be surprised, adopting the thoughts of the world and its very language about riches and poverty, honor and contempt, the various happy or unhappy events. Is it, perchance, a rare thing to hear so-called Christians, and even persons consecrated to God in the religious state, speak with great esteem of the petty trifles that impassion the worldly, lament what the world regrets, congratulate those who smile at wealth and riches? It seems that they prefer the beatitudes of the world to those of the Gospel, which are diametrically opposed to it. If the false goods of the world are sometimes despised, it is for philosophical reasons rather than in the spirit of faith. It would be preferable, however, that this reason alone: “Jesus Christ has said it, Jesus Christ has done it this way,” should have greater weight than all those other reasons put together. The famous expression of the disciples of Pythagoras: Magister dixit, “the master has said so”, was

But when applied to Jesus Christ, it should be an unquestionable axiom for his disciples, because “heaven and earth will pass away, but the words of Christ will remain forever” (Mt 24:35). Let us, therefore, remain attentive to the Master’s word and let us adapt our lives to his divine lessons. He has said: “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 19:24). He has said: “Woe to you who are now full, for you will hunger; woe to you who now laugh, for you will groan and weep” (Le 6:25). And, on the contrary: “Blessed are the poor, the hungry, those who mourn, those who suffer persecution” (Le 6:20-22). Natural reason may tell us that these divine oracles should be explained, softened, interpreted with less rigor than they sound materially; that we do not understand how peace can be found in war, glory in opprobrium, joy in suffering. But let us not listen to him; let us listen to Jesus, our Master: he has said it thus, and he would not have said it if it were not true. The true disciple of the Savior voluntarily blinds himself in order to see better, renounces the prudence of the flesh in order to follow the prudence of the spirit, and becomes a fool in order to be truly wise: for “the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God” (1 Cor 3:19). 279. c) Natural inclinations. It is not strange that nature should react to the very immolation that the spirit of faith prepares and demands of it. She understands very well that all is lost for her if we listen attentively to the truths of faith and try to adjust our conduct to them. It will be necessary to renounce the pleasures and satisfactions that she loves so much, to die to the world and to herself, to bear in her own flesh the mortification of Jesus Christ…. At the mere thought of such a crucifixion of the flesh and its cravings, imposed on anyone who wants to belong to the Son of God (cf. Gal 5:24), everything is disturbed and unsettled in the imagination

and in the senses; and, when it comes to putting these uncomfortable truths into practice, we find obscure, says St. Francis Xavier, what had seemed clear and evident to us in the fervor of prayer. One hardly understands the need to overcome oneself when the hour of combat arrives; self-love invents a thousand reasons to postpone, at least, the sacrifices that frighten it so much. What, then, does the interior man do, the free man, master of himself, who governs his actions and does not allow himself to be dragged

to be guided and guided by them? At any time and in any circumstance he begins by questioning his faith in order to be guided and guided by what it indicates to him. This is, in fact, what must be done; because if we let nature take the initiative, with its extraordinary ability to have its way, it will complicate the simplest matters and will attract to it, deceiving them, the powers of the soul; and when faith comes to interpose its authority, it will find the understanding prevented and the will defeated or vacillating, with which it will hardly be able to reconquer its empire. It is very important to watch diligently over our own heart and its first impressions, in order to direct all its movements to the light of the torch of faith. It is very useful to make a word of faith, a divine oracle, precede all our works and decisions, according to the admonition of the Holy Spirit: “Let counsel precede all undertakings” (Eccl 37:20).

Chapter 9

We now turn to one of the most important and fundamental themes in the religious life. Prayer should be for every Christian something like “the breath of the soul,” for without it his spiritual life will soon succumb to asphyxiation. But in a very special way it is needed by the religious who has consecrated his life to the professional exercise of the virtue of religion, one of the fundamental acts of which, as is well known, is prayer. Let us listen to the Angelic Doctor h “We have already said that the proper object of religion is to render honor and reverence to God. And, therefore, everything by which we render reverence to God falls within religion. This is the case with prayer, for by it man submits himself to God and confesses his need of Him as the author of all his goods. It is therefore clear that prayer is an act proper to the virtue of religion”. Then the Angelic Doctor warns that prayer is the most important act of religion, immediately after devotion, which is its primary and fundamental interior act 2.

The religious is to practice prayer in all its forms and modalities: public and private; internal and external; vocal and mental; of praise, petition, thanksgiving, *etc.* All 1 2-2,83.3* All 1 2-2,83.3* All 1 2-2,83.3* All 1 2-2,83.3

2 Cf. 2-2,83,3 ad 1.

They are basically reduced to two forms: public or liturgical prayer and private or particular prayer. Precisely because of

its public character, the first is expressed principally with words (vocal prayer); the second should be principally silent and internal (mental prayer). It is necessary to read specialized works, since the nature and extension of our work does not allow us an exhaustive examination 3. i*.

Liturgical prayer

281. Liturgical prayer objectively occupies first place among all the other kinds of prayer that Christians can practice. It is the official prayer of the Church, involving the whole mystical Body of Christ with its divine Head at its head. All things being equal, no other prayer has the power and sanctifying efficacy of liturgical prayer. Dom Columba Marmion devotes two precious chapters to liturgical prayer in his celebrated work Jesus Christ, ideal of the monk. To judge the objective value of a thing, we must consider the degree of glory it brings to God, since God created all things for his own glory (cf. Prov 16:4). Things are worth as much as God esteems them, and no more: this is the only objectively true criterion for judging them. 2.0 There are things that glorify God by their very nature, for example, the Holy Mass, the sacraments, the practice of the Christian virtues, etc.; others, however, glorify God only when an intelligent being orders them and directs them to that end, to which they are not directed by themselves, for example, manual or intellectual work, teaching, gardening, *etc.* Prayer belongs to the first group, not only because of the intention of the one who recites it (the end of the one who works), but also because of its very nature and the very elements of which it consists (the end of the thing itself). 3.a Among all the possible prayers, the public prayer of the Church, that is, the prayer of the Church, occupies objectively the first place3 We recommend, among many others, El sentido teológico de la liturgio, by Vagagaggini (BAC, Madrid 1959), and Los caminos de la oración mental, by Lehodey. 4 Cf. Jesus Christ,

ideol of the monk jc.14 and 15. If possible, we make the summary based on the same words of Dom Marmion.

official liturgical celebration. Together with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, to which it is intimately related, liturgical prayer constitutes the most complete expression of religion. The official recitation of the breviary constitutes a truly divine work: it is the true Opus Dei. 4*° To glimpse a little of the excellence of the divine office, we must go back to the foundation from which it derives and then examine its nature, its elements, its very end. a) The ultimate foundation of its excellence is the eternal song of the divine Word in the bosom of the Father* The Word is the sublime hymn which God sings to himself eternally and which springs from the unfathomable abysses of his own divinity. God the Father is infinitely pleased with it, since it exhaustively expresses his infinite perfections. He has no need of any other praise, since it is impossible to add absolutely nothing to the infinite glorification which the Father receives from the Word in union with the Holy Spirit in the bosom of the most blessed Trinity. b) But “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (lo 1:14). From that moment on, the whole of creation was associated with the eternal song of the Word through the adorable humanity of Christ. No longer only in the inaccessible sanctuary of God’s intimate life, but from the depths of creation a grandiose hymn of praise and glory began to rise up to the most blessed Trinity: “Through Christ, with Christ and in Christ, all honor and glory is given to you, almighty God the Father, in unity with the Holy Spirit” (canon of the Mass). c) Having completed his redemptive mission on earth, Christ left to his Church-his most beloved bride-the task of perpetuating through the centuries that

unceasing “praise of glory” begun by him on earth and continued in heaven as Head of his Mystical Body until the end of the ages (cf. Hebr 7:zs). This is the liturgy, that is, the praise of the Church united and supported in Christ; better still, the praise of Christ himself, the Incarnate Word, offered to God by the Church. This is why Opus Dei is the prayer par excellence; this is the fundamental difference that distinguishes it from other prayers, this is its inalienable and incommunicable privilege: that it is the work of God, carried out together with Christ and in his name by the Church, which is his most beloved spouse. It is the “voice of the bride”-vox sponsae-which God always listens to with particular pleasure and which has, therefore, an incomparable efficacy in the face of his divine obedience* d) The Church associates all her children with this perpetual praise of the glory of God; but she entrusts this divine mission in a most special way to a chosen group of select souls: they are the priests and religious obliged to pray the canonical hours. In exercising their august function, they play the role of ambassadors of the Church before the throne of the Most High. Thus the divine office, sung with the mouth and heart of man, becomes the hymn of all creation before its supreme Maker. e) The divine office, which is a special homage of faith, hope and charity, reaches its highest perfection when it is accompanied by the sorrowful sacrifice of the one who recites it. It then becomes a true sacrifice of praise-sacrificium laudis-which immensely glorifies God by its intimate union with the divine Martyr of Calvary.

5.0 In addition to divine praise-which is its primary purpose-liturgical prayer becomes for the one who recites it

C.p.

The prayer of the religious

The liturgy is an inexhaustible source of graces and a most effective means of personal sanctification. a) The liturgy offers us beautiful formulas for prayers of supplication or petition. It is true that we should not go to the choir to beg, but above all to praise God. But the psalms do not only express admiration, joy, the overflowing joy of the soul before the divine perfections, but also implore the remedy of all our spiritual and material needs. Praise is continually intermingled with supplication. Now then: it is not possible to beat God in generosity: the effort with which we try to intensify our praise is matched by His pouring down upon us a veritable torrent of graces and blessings. bj During the recitation of the divine office, acts of faith, hope, charity, religion, patience, humility, etc., multiply, becoming, by the same token, a most abundant source of merits. c) The liturgy places before us the person and mysteries of Christ throughout the liturgical year. Everything leads us to contemplate Jesus and to draw intimately close to him, which is truly incomparable in its sanctifying efficacy. All our holiness consists in uniting ourselves to Christ and assimilating ourselves to Him for the glory of the Father.

6º However, liturgical prayer is not a sacrament that produces grace in us by itself as the sacraments do. It is true that, being the official prayer of the Church, it has a certain efficacy by itself-ex opere operantis Ecclesiae-but it is far removed from the intrinsic efficacy-ex opere operato-of the sacraments. Its sanctifying efficacy depends for the most part on the subjective dispositions of the one who practices it. 282. In order to draw from liturgical prayer its maximum sanctifying efficacy, it is necessary to recite it under the following conditions: a) in intimate union with Christ, head of the Mystical Body, and of the whole Church militant, purgative and triumphant; b) with dignity, attention and

devotion; c) with the greatest possible impetus of charity. Let us not forget that the supernatural merit in relation to the essential prize of glory is always evaluated by the degree of charity that we have put into doing the meritorious work <5.

When it is said under these conditions, liturgical prayer has a truly incalculable sanctifying efficacy. 5 It is a pity that the prayer Aperi, Domine, os meum...., which used to be obligatory at the beginning of the Divine Office, has been suppressed. It contained these conditions, which are so important for the supernatural efficacy of liturgical prayer. Many pious people continue to recite that preparatory prayer laudably, since, although it is not obligatory today, it is not forbidden by any means. Cf. our Theology of Charity 2.4 ed. (BAG, Madrid iq6s) n.50.

Our holiness," writes Dom Marmion,7 "is of a supernatural order, absolutely transcendental, having its origin not in us, but in God. But, as St. Paul says, 'we do not know how we ought to pray'; we do not know how to make good use of this most important means of sanctification; but the Spirit of Jesus, who has dwelt in us since baptism, who leads the Church and is like the soul of the Mystical Body, prays in us 'with groanings that cannot be uttered' (Rom 8:26). In the liturgical office, everything has been inspired by him, everything has been composed under his impulse. He, who is the author of the psalms, deeply impresses on the docile and devout soul the truth that they express so admirably, and arouses in it the sentiments that flow from the sacred canticles. Little by little it lives and feeds on them; it sees and judges all things as God Himself sees and judges them;

it lives constantly in the supernatural world, it draws near to Him who alone is the object of our acts of religion and remains united to Him, made visible in the mysteries and in the power of His grace. There is no surer way than this to remain united to Jesus and to walk towards God. The Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, leads us to Christ, and Christ leads us to the Father by making us pleasing to Him. jWhat incomparable security, what powerful fruitfulness of interior life this spiritual path guarantees us!"

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Second Vatican Council, in proposing "to increase the Christian life among the faithful from day to day and to adapt the institutions which are subject to change better to the needs of our time…, believes that it has a special responsibility to provide for the reform and promotion of the liturgy.8 And, in explaining in greater detail the supreme importance of the liturgy, the sacred council solemnly affirms: "The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church tends, and at the same time the source from which all her strength flows. For the apostolic works are ordered to the end that, once made children of God by faith and baptism, all may gather together, praise God in the midst of the Church, participate in the sacrifice and eat the Lord's Supper. For its part, the liturgy itself urges the faithful, having been "filled with the paschal sacraments," to be "concordant in piety"; it prays God that "they may preserve in their lives what they have received in faith"; and the renewal of the Lord's covenant with mankind in the Eucharist enkindles and draws the faithful to the compelling charity of Christ. Therefore, from the liturgy, especially from the Eucharist, grace flows to us as from its source, and that sanctification of men in Christ and that glorification of God, to which the other works of the Church tend as to their end, are obtained with the utmost efficacy".

However, the Council itself, almost immediately afterward, warns that liturgical prayer is not enough, despite its sovereign efficacy. It is necessary to prepare and complete it with particular or private prayer. Here are the very words of the council 10: 7 Jesus Christ, ideal of the monk c. 15 n.3. 8 Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy n. i.

Ibid. n.io.

Ibid. n.12.

“However, participation in the sacred liturgy does not embrace the whole of the spiritual life. Indeed, the Christian, called to pray in common, must nevertheless also go into his room to pray to the Father in secret (cf. Mt 6:6); moreover, he must pray without ceasing, as the Apostle teaches (cf. i Thess 5:17). And the same Apostle exhorts us to always bear the mortification of Jesus in our body, so that his life may also be manifested in our mortal flesh (2 Cor 4:10-11). For this reason we ask the Lord in the sacrifice of the Mass that, “having received the offering of the spiritual victim,” he may make of us an “eternal offering” to himself.

Let us now speak of private prayer as an absolutely indispensable complement to public or liturgical prayer. 2.

Private prayer

283. If the importance of public or liturgical prayer is great, the sanctifying efficacy of particular or private prayer is no lesser, understanding as such, principally, mental prayer practiced in recollection and solitude. Both forms of prayer

are not only not incompatible, but complement and benefit each other, mental prayer being the best fruit of liturgical prayer and, in turn, its best preparation. Let us listen to the immortal pontiff Pius XII in his admirable encyclical on the liturgy 11: “In the spiritual life there can be no opposition or repugnance between the divine action, which infuses grace into souls to continue our redemption, and the effective collaboration of man, who must not make vain the gift of God (cf. 2 Cor 6:1); between the efficacy of the external rite of the sacraments, which comes ex opere operato, and the merit of the one who administers or receives them, an act usually called opus operantis; between private prayers and public prayers; between ethics and contemplation; between the ascetical life and liturgical piety; between the power of jurisdiction and legitimate magisterium and the eminently priestly power exercised in the sacred ministry itself. For grave reasons, the Church prescribes to the ministers of the altar and to religious that, at certain times, they attend to devout meditation, to diligent examination and amendment of conscience and to other spiritual exercises, because they are especially destined to carry out the liturgical functions of sacrifice and divine praise. Undoubtedly, liturgical prayer, being the public prayer of the illustrious Bride of Jesus Christ, has a greater dignity than private prayers; but this superiority does not mean that there is contrast or opposition between these two kinds of prayer. The two merge and harmonize, because they are animated by a single spirit: “All and in all, Christ” (Coi 3:11), and tend to the same end: “Until Christ is formed in us” (Gal 4:19).

Four years earlier, in his encyclical on the Mystical Body of Christ, the same pontiff Pius XII had written:3 11 Pius XII, encyclical Medialor Dei, November 20, 1947, n. 36-37. 12 Cf. Canon Code, en.125,126,565,571,505,1367. 13 Pius XII, encyclical Mystíci corporis Christi, June 29, 1943, n.40, in Collection of Encyclicals published by A. C. E. E.

“There are some who deny to our prayers any proper impetratory efficacy, or who endeavor to insinuate among the people that prayers addressed to God in private are of little value, while those which are in fact valid are rather public prayers, made in the name of the Church, since they spring from the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ. All this is certainly erroneous: for the divine Redeemer has closely united to himself not only his Church, as his most beloved spouse, but in her also the souls of each of the faithful, with whom he longs to converse very intimately, especially after they approach the Eucharistic table. And although common and public prayer, as coming from Mother Church herself, is superior to all others by reason of the dignity of the bride of Christ, nevertheless, all prayers, even those said very privately, far from lacking in dignity and virtue, contribute much to the usefulness of the Mystical Body itself in general, since in it all that is good and just which each of the members works, through the communion of saints, redounds to the good of all. And there is nothing to prevent individual men, because they are members of this Body, from asking for special graces for themselves, even of an earthly order, with due submission to the divine will, since they are free persons and subject to special needs.14 And how great is the esteem in which they should be held, in order that they may be able to ask for special graces for themselves, even of an earthly order, with due submission to the divine will, since they are free persons and subject to special needs. And how great an esteem all should have for meditation on heavenly things is shown not only by the teachings of the Church, but also by the use and example of all the saints”.

It is, therefore, a fatal and pernicious error to belittle or demean private and particular prayer, or to give it less importance than it really has, on the vain pretext that public or liturgical prayer is more excellent and efficacious. Not only are the two prayers not incompatible with each other, but they must be closely united in order to influence each other and thus increase to a high degree the sanctifying efficacy that each of them has in itself independently of the other. Moreover, it is an experimentally proven fact in the lives of the saints that in certain states of very elevated prayer-infused contemplation-liturgical prayer is highly painful and mortifying for them, even though they faithfully fulfill their liturgical duties with all exactitude and care. The profound repose of contemplative prayer is at odds with the external ceremonies that inevitably accompany the recitation of liturgical prayers. If the contemplative phenomenon is very intense, the so-called “binding of the powers” is almost always produced, which almost materially prevents them from uttering a single word. Only by doing much violence and sometimes even to the point of voluntary distraction do they manage to disengage themselves from their very high contemplative prayer and pray the divine office in the choir or in private 15. 15 In such cases it would be manifest imprudence to resist the action of the Holy Spirit, who is working very intensely in the soul, under the pretext of attending to vocal prayers, however liturgical they may be, unless it is a question of the Holy Mass or the obligatory recitation of the Divine Office. 14 Cf. 2-2, 83.5 and 6. 15 We have spoken at length about this in another of our works, to which we refer the reader. Cf. Theology of Christian Perfection, 4th ed. (Madrid 1963), n. 430.

Cp.

prayer of the religious

284. In a remarkable article on liturgical prayer and particular prayer, a famous contemporary theologian reaches the following conclusions 16: 1. a

Liturgical prayer is by itself the most excellent and efficacious,

2. a All Christians, and particularly priests and religious, should be competently instructed in this excellence and efficacy of liturgical piety, so that they may appreciate it, take advantage of it, prefer it, and subordinate their particular piety to it and draw inspiration from it as much as they can. 3. a Although the excellence and efficacy of liturgical worship are in part unfailing, they require for their proper effect, especially in those who participate in it, the cooperation of personal religiosity. 4. a Christian religiosity is not limited to and satisfied with liturgical prayer, but demands multiple varieties of particular piety which prepare and complement it. 5. a Particular or extra-liturgical piety is also Christian and ecclesial prayer, that is, prayer carried out in dependence and union with Christ and with the Church, and at the impulse of the one and common divine Spirit, 6. a Although community or liturgical prayer is in itself superior and more efficacious, it is possible that in fact it is better and more advantageous to pray in particular.

Here is how the learned theologian justifies this last conclusion: “Recognizing the superiority in excellence and efficacy of liturgical prayer, already considered above, it is only fair to note that, in fact, particular prayer can be better and more sanctifying. For what reasons? The first and most respectable is undoubtedly the divine good pleasure, which is communicated when, how and how much it wants, and which gives more or less to each one, as it pleases him.

There is no reason against this reason. No one ties God's hands, just as no one knows his most wise designs or influences his most free wills. Experience proves that the diffusion of the divine graces of prayer and of divine union often takes place in greater abundance outside liturgical celebrations. There is no doubt that these conditions can sometimes be more favorable in private prayer than in official prayer. It is possible, for example, that the urgency of the need, the religious fervor of the moment, etc., facilitate a good private prayer. Let us not forget that, in the final analysis, it is each soul that prays, because even common prayer must be appropriated and personalized by each one, and the common functions and formulas do not always respond to personal predispositions. It is, of course, the subject who has to try to accommodate himself to the religious spirit of the Church, but it is unquestionable that many times the praying person finds in the freedom of his personal communication with God greater ease and greater fruit. The causes can be multiple; and among them are to be pointed out the sense of freedom and the sense of freedom of the individual, which is the most important.

Spiritual n.iS (1961) p.461-478.

of the ritual prayers, which can contrast with the feeling and the need of the orant; the amplitude of the same ones, which is not commensurate with that of his interior fervor; and still more, the spiritual and psychological situation of the subjects, not at all or very little compatible, sometimes, with the external religious practices. It is understood that liturgical prescriptions cannot be accommodated to these peculiarities and that the persons in question must

participate as best they can in the public offices that are obligatory for them, because, in spite of their inconveniences, they will not fail to be fruitful for them. But it must be recognized that liturgical externalities are not the best channel for the intimate piety of these souls. The way in which God communicates Himself to them is the best way to communicate with Him".

285. From all this it is clear and evident that the exclusivist method of those who claim to make liturgical prayer the only acceptable way of relating the soul to God is not a good system, nor does it coincide with the objective truth of things, nor is that of those who lower the importance of liturgical prayer in order to grant the sanctified monopoly to private or particular prayer. Both extremes are equally vicious; the truth lies in the middle ground, that is, in the perfect harmony and interpenetration of both forms of prayer, which mutually benefit each other with their respective advantages and excellencies. Prayer," writes Dom Columba Marmion, referring to mental prayer 18, "is one of the most effective means for realizing here on earth our union with God and our imitation of Jesus Christ. The frequent contact of the soul with God in faith, through prayer and the life of prayer, helps powerfully in the transformation of our soul from the supernatural point of view. Prayer done well, the life of prayer, is transforming. Moreover, union with God in prayer puts us in a position to participate more fruitfully in the other means that Christ has established to communicate Himself to us and make us like Him. Why so? Is prayer more eminent, more effective, than the Holy Sacrifice, than the reception of the sacraments, which are the authentic channels of grace? Certainly not. Every time we approach these sources we receive an increase of grace, an increase of divine life. But this increase depends, at least in part, on our dispositions. Now prayer, the life of prayer, maintains, stimulates, enlivens and

perfects these sentiments of faith, humility, trust and love, which together constitute the soul's best predisposition to receive the abundance of divine grace. A soul that is familiar with prayer will derive greater benefit from the sacraments and the other means of salvation than one in which prayer is intermittent, without continuity and without vigor. 17 Nevertheless, the rule of moderation given by St. Thomas should always be kept in mind: "The measure of things is determined by their end, as medicine is determined by health. For this reason, prayer should last as long as it is necessary to excite the fervor of interior desire. When it has exceeded this measure, in such a way that its continuation would produce tedium, it should not be prolonged any longer.... And just as this must be taken into account in particular prayer with regard to the fervor of the pray-er, so must it be taken into account in common prayer, with reference to the devotion of the people* (2-2:83,14). 18 In Jesus Christ^ life of olma c.10.

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divine office, to attend Holy Mass, to receive the sacraments, to hear the word of God; but their progress will often be very mediocre. Why is this so? Because the principal author of our perfection and holiness is God himself, and prayer keeps the soul in frequent contact with God; prayer establishes and, having established it, keeps in the soul like a brazier, in which, although not always in activity, the fire of love is always hidden; v when this soul is put in direct communication with the divine life, for example in the sacraments, it is like a powerful breath that envelops it, lifts it up and fills it with a marvelous abundance. The

supernatural life of a soul is measured by its union with God through Christ in faith and love; this love must be manifested in acts; but these acts, in order to be produced in a regular and intense way, require the life of prayer. It can be assured that, as a matter of ordinary law, our progress in divine love depends practically on our life of prayer".

Another distinguished Benedictine author, Dom German Morin, fully agrees with the ideas of his colleague from Maredsous. In his work The Monastic Ideal, written precisely for monks of contemplative life, he writes resolutely l9: "It would be a mistake to believe that, in the matter of prayer, the monk can be satisfied with official prayer, with the divine office. First of all, psalmody is an action Optes Dei; but an action that presupposes contemplation either as a preliminary or as a result. In the first aspect, psalmody is the highest expression of the fervent admiration that the soul feels for God, whose proximity incessantly rejuvenates it; considered in the second aspect, it is a very powerful means to excite the yearnings of the same soul towards the happy state of contemplation. Our ancestors understood very well that these two forms of prayer are inseparable one from the other; that is why before each psalm or collect of the office they ordered a few moments of silence, during which, each one prostrate in the presence of the Lord, could express the affections that the recitation of the psalmody brought up in his heart or secretly formulate the vows that the president of the assembly would then offer to God in the name of all those present. It was what Benedict calls reverentia orationis. This has now been suppressed, but the main thing remains the same. The monk will bear little fruit from his attendance at the divine office if he does not add those peculiar orationes, those exercises of piety, the sum of which constitutes the obligatory tribute of every soul called to live this most intimate communication with God, which we ordinarily call the spiritual life".

286. The personal experience of thousands of religious confirms the truth of these speculative principles in practice every day. The religious who abandons or progressively diminishes his life of mental prayer-even if it is in order to devote himself more intensely to the apostolate, or under the pretext that liturgical prayer is sufficient-will noticeably and rapidly decline into spiritual lukewarmness and end up leading a life totally unworthy of one consecrated to God. Under these conditions, a return to his primitive state of fervor is little more than a 39

Dom Germán Morín, O. S. BEl

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monastic ideal (Montserrat Monastery 1931)

In our years of religious formation, we heard a great spiritual master say that it is very difficult, if not impossible, for a soul to reach the degrees of mystical union with God if it does not practice intense mental prayer, at least for two hours every day, but it is true that mental prayer cannot be the same for all souls and all kinds of life. The general principle is that it should be in proportion to the strength, attractiveness and occupations of each person. St. Alphonsus Liguori says that it should not be imposed on beginners more than half an hour daily, and that the time should be increased as the soul's strength grows 20. St. Francis de Sales, writing especially for people of the world and those of active life, asks for an hour 2l, and so does St. Ignatius in his Exercises 22. Those who write more especially

for religious ask for an hour and a half to two hours daily 23. Whatever the case may be, it is certain that without mental prayer, without much mental prayer, no one will reach the summit of Christian perfection, even if he practices vocal prayer intensely and executes with all rigor and exactitude all the rubrics and ceremonies of public or liturgical prayer itself; because, in spite of the enormous sanctifying efficacy of liturgical prayer, it cannot be practiced properly unless it is preceded, accompanied and complemented by a life of intense mental prayer. It can be affirmed without fear of being mistaken that the religious who practices only liturgical prayer will not practice liturgical prayer properly. By way of an appendix, we are going to collect here a precious booklet by Bossuet that deserves to be known by those souls who seriously aspire to sanctify themselves, mainly through a life of intense prayer. Often, weariness and aversion towards mental prayer have their origin in a mistaken concept of it. Certain methods of mental prayer complicate and entangle it in such a way that it is necessary

20 Cf. St. Alphonsus, Praxis c.g n.123. Devotional Life p.2.* c.i n.3. Spiritual Exercises r¡.T3> 2i St. Teresa: “At least two hours each day” (Life 8,6); Br. Luis de Granada, Prayer and Meditation 1 c.10 n.6. 21 22

much encouragement to decide to practice it on the basis of such a complication. The great Bossuet set out to overcome such inconveniences, and wrote a precious booklet with the purpose of facilitating the exercise of mental prayer for all souls of good will who seriously aspire to sanctify themselves. It is entitled A Short and Easy Way to Pray in Faith and in the Simple Presence of God. Here it is in its entirety 24: I*.

What does it consist of?

It is necessary to accustom oneself to nourish the soul with a simple and loving gaze on God and on Jesus Christ Our Lord; and to achieve this it is necessary to gently remove it from reasoning, discourse and the multitude of affections, to keep it in simplicity, respect and attention and thus bring it closer and closer to God, its only sovereign good, its first principle and ultimate end. Union with God through simplification

The perfection of this life consists in union with our sovereign good, and the greater the simplicity, the more perfect the union. This is why grace interiorly asks those who want to be perfect to simplify themselves more and more, so that they may finally become capable of the fruitive enjoyment of the only thing necessary, that is, of eternal unity. Let us therefore often say in the depths of our heart: “O only thing necessary! Only one thing I want, only one thing I seek, only one thing I desire, only one thing is necessary for me: God mine and all my things!>) 3.

Contemplation replaces meditation with advantage

Meditation is very good in its time and very useful at the beginning of the spiritual life. But it is necessary not to dwell on it forever, since the soul, by its fidelity in mortifying and recollecting itself, ordinarily receives a purer and more intimate prayer, which can be designated by the name of prayer of simplicity, and which consists in a simple gaze or loving attention toward any divine object, whether it be God in Himself or one of His infinite perfections, Jesus Christ or one of His mysteries, or one of the other Christian truths. The soul then leaves discourse and avails itself of a sweet contemplation, which keeps it in repose and attention and makes it susceptible to the divine operations and impressions which the Holy Spirit communicates to it. It

works little and receives much; its work is sweet, and yet more fruitful 24 It can be seen in Bossuet's Complete Works, vol.7 p.244*248. We add the subtitles to better highlight the main ideas.

The more one comes closer and closer to the fountain from which light, grace and virtue flow, the more abundantly does one partake of it. 4.

The initial act of faith

The practice of this prayer should begin in the morning, upon awakening, by making an act of faith in the presence of God, present everywhere, and in that of Jesus Christ, whose gaze never departs from us, even if we were to hide in the center of the earth. This act is produced either in a sensible and ordinary way, as if saying interiorly: "I believe that my God is present", or with a simple recollection of faith in the divine presence, carried out in a simpler and more spiritual way. 5.

Fundamental practice

It is not necessary then to strive to multiply or produce a multitude of other acts or different dispositions, but simply to remain attentive to this presence of God, exposed to his divine gaze, and thus to continue this devout attention or exposure as long as Our Lord grants us this grace, without striving to do other things than those that come to us, since this prayer is a prayer with God alone and a union that eminently contains all the other particular dispositions and that disposes the soul to passivity. God becomes the only interior master and works in the soul more particularly than

ordinarily. The less the creature works, the more powerfully God works in it; and since the operation of God is a repose, the soul becomes in a certain way similar to Him with this manner of prayer, and for this reason marvelous effects are produced in it. As the rays of the sun make plants grow, blossom and bear fruit, so the soul that remains attentive and calmly exposed to the rays of the divine sun of justice receives better the divine influences, which enrich it with all kinds of virtues. 6.

First acts of the day

The continuation of this attention in faith will serve him to thank God for the graces received during the night and throughout his life, for the offering of himself and of all his actions, for his uprightness of intention, *etc.* 7.

How advantageous are

The soul will imagine that it is experiencing a loss through the omission of all these acts, but the experience will make it aware of the loss it has suffered.

On the contrary, he gains a great deal, for as his knowledge of God becomes greater, his love will be purer, his intentions more upright, his aversion to sin stronger, his recollection, mortification and humility more continuous. 8.

Does not interfere with other acts and devotions

All this is no obstacle for the soul to produce some acts of virtue, interior or exterior, when it feels impelled to do so by the movement of grace. But the ordinary background of its

interior must be the aforementioned attention in faith or union with God, who will keep it abandoned in his hands and surrendered to his love so that he may accomplish in it all his divine will. 9.

Other regular events of the day

When the special time dedicated to prayer arrives, it is necessary to begin it with great respect for the simple remembrance of God, invoking his Spirit and uniting oneself intimately to Jesus Christ. And it must be continued in this same way, as well as the vocal prayers, the chanting of the choir, the holy Mass celebrated or heard, and even the examination of conscience, since this same light of faith, which keeps us attentive to God, will make us discover our minor imperfections and conceive towards them a great dislike and aversion. It is necessary to go to the meal in the same spirit of simplicity, which will keep us more attentive to God than to the delicacies and will leave us free to better understand the reading that is made there. This practice does not bind us to anything, but only to keep our soul detached from all kinds of imperfections, given only to God and intimately united to Him, in which consists all our good. 10.

Avoid dissipation

In recreation it is necessary to keep oneself in the same disposition, in order to give the body and spirit some rest, without dissipating oneself with curious news, immoderate laughter, indiscreet words, etc., but keeping oneself pure and free within, without disturbing others; uniting oneself frequently to God, by simple and loving impulses, remembering that we are in His divine presence and that He does not want us to separate ourselves at any time from Him and from His holy will. This is the most ordinary rule of this

state of simplicity and the sovereign disposition of the soul: the need to do the will of God.

of God in all things. To see everything coming from the hands of God through all things is what sustains and strengthens the soul in all sorts of events and occupations, and what keeps us in possession of simplicity. Therefore, to follow always the will of God, after the example of Jesus Christ, and united to Him as our Chief, is an excellent means of increasing this manner of prayer and of tending by it to the most solid virtue and the most perfect sanctity. ii. To maintain recollection

It is necessary to behave in the same way and with the same spirit and to keep this simple and intimate union with God in all our actions and in all our conduct: in the parlor, in the cell, at table, in recreation. It is fitting to add that in all our conversations we should seek to edify our neighbor, taking every opportunity to lead him to piety, to the love of God, to the practice of good works, so as to be the good odor of Christ. If anyone speaks," says St. Peter, "let it be the words of God (I Pet. 4:11), as if God himself were speaking through him. It is enough for this to simply surrender to his spirit; he will inspire you in every circumstance to say what is fitting to say without affectation. Finally, the day will end with this holy presence: the examination, the night prayer, and even going to bed. It is necessary to give oneself to sleep with this loving attention, interrupting the rest with some fervent words full of unction-when one wakes up during the night-as many darts and cries of the heart towards God. For example: "My God, be all things to me; I want nothing but You in time

and in eternity; Lord, who is like You? My Lord and my God; my God and nothing else”. r2.

Complete self-sacrifice is required

It should be noted that this true simplicity makes us live in a continuous death and in perfect detachment, because it makes us go directly to God without dwelling on any creature. But this grace of simplicity is not obtained by speculation, but by a great purity of heart and by true mortification and self-contempt. Anyone who flees from suffering, from humiliating himself, from dying to himself, will never enter into it, and this is the reason why there are so few who succeed in it, because almost no one wants to die to himself, bringing with it immense losses and depriving himself of incomprehensible goods. Bienaven

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The prayer of the religious

423

Happy are the faithful souls who spare nothing in order to be entirely filled with God! Happy are the religious persons who faithfully practice all their observances according to their own institute! This fidelity makes them constantly die to themselves, to their own judgment, to their own will, inclinations and natural repugnances, and disposes them in an admirable way, although hidden and unknown, to this excellent way of prayer, for what is more discreet and hidden than a religious who follows in everything his observances and the common exercises of religion, there being nothing extraordinary in this and yet constituting a total and continuous death to himself? By this way the

kingdom of God is established in us and everything else is given to us as an addition. 13.

Required spiritual reading

The reading of spiritual books should not be neglected. But we must read with simplicity and a spirit of prayer and not out of mere curiosity. We read in this way when we allow ourselves to be impressed in our soul by the lights and sentiments that reading reveals to us, but this impression is made rather by the presence of God than by our industry. 14.

Three fundamental maxims

It is also necessary to keep in mind three fundamental maxims. The first is that a devout person without prayer is a body without a soul. The second, that one cannot have solid and true prayer without mortification, recollection and humility. The third is that perseverance is necessary in order to never back down in the face of the difficulties that will come our way. 15.

The ways of the Holy Spirit

It must not be forgotten that one of the greatest secrets of the spiritual life is that the Holy Spirit leads us not only through lights, sweetness, consolations, tenderness and ease, but also through darkness, blindness, insensitivities, sorrows, anguish, sadness and rebelliousness of the passions and humors. And it must be added, moreover, that this crucified way is necessary, it is good, it is the best, the surest, the one that leads more quickly to perfection. The enlightened soul greatly esteems this conduct of God, who allows it to be tested by creatures, filled with temptations and abandonments. It understands that all these are favors

rather than misfortunes, and it prefers to die on the cross of Calvary rather than to live in the sweetness of the world.

of Tabor. Experience will eventually make him know the truth of these beautiful words: “The night will be my light in the midst of my delights, and my night is not dark, but all things shine in the light” (Ps 138:12). After the purification of the soul in purgatory of its sufferings through which it must pass, there will come illumination, rest, joy, through intimate union with God, which will convert this world, even though it is an exile, into a little paradise. The best prayer is that in which the soul abandons itself more perfectly to the sentiments and dispositions that God arouses in it and in which it tries to conform itself with greater simplicity, humility and fidelity to the will and example of Jesus Christ.

Chapter

SOLITUDE AND SILENCE Among the means indicated by the great masters of the spiritual life for attaining perfection in the religious life, the love of solitude and silence occupies a very prominent place. Not because in themselves they have some sanctifying virtue (there can even be vicious excesses, such as misanthropy and taciturnity, which have nothing to do with virtue), but because, when properly oriented, they create the indispensable climate for interior life and profound contact with God. We will therefore consider these two great instruments of perfection, which, for the sake of clarity, we will examine separately, in spite of their intimate relations and profound concomitances. i.

Loneliness

288* In posing the problem of whether religious life in community is more perfect than the eremitical or solitary life, the Angelic Doctor reasons with his usual lucidity and depth on the advantages and disadvantages of solitude in comparison with those of social or community life. Here are his own words: “Solitude, like poverty, is not perfection itself, but a means of perfection. That is why Abbot Moses says that “solitude is to be esteemed with a view to purity of heart,” like fasting and the like. And it is evident that solitude is not a means suitable for action, but for contemplation, according to the words of Hosea: “I will lead her to solitude í

2-2,188,8.

and I will speak to his heart" (Hos 2:14). For this reason, it is not suitable for orders consecrated to spiritual or corporal works of the active life, unless it is for a determined period of time, following the example of Christ, of whom we read that "he went to the mountain to pray and spent the night in prayer" (Le. 12). On the other hand, it is proper to contemplative orders. However, it must be kept in mind that the solitary must be self-sufficient. This supposes that "he lacks nothing," which is the definition of the perfect being. Consequently, solitude suits the contemplative who has already attained perfection. Now, perfection can be reached in two ways: a) By the gift of God alone, like St. John the Baptist, who "was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb" (cf. Le 1:15), for which reason, while still a child, "he lived in the desert" (Le 1:80). bj Through the practice of virtue, for St. Paul says: "Solid food is for the perfect, those who by virtue of habit have their senses exercised to discern good from evil" (Hebr 5:14). But man can find in the company of others a twofold help for this practice of virtue. In the first place, for his understanding of the object of contemplation. For this reason St. Jerome writes: "It pleases me that you keep holy company and that you do not teach yourself". A second help is for the will, and ensures the repression of evil affections by the example and correction of others, for, as St. Gregory says, "For what is the solitude of the body worth if the solitude of the heart is lacking?" Hence social life is necessary to those who are exercised in perfection, while solitude is proper to those who have already attained it. Thus St. Jerome says: "We have little part in the solitary life, which we never finish praising. But we want to see trained soldiers come out of the monasteries, who are not frightened by the first attacks, because they have been tested for a long time". Thus, there is the same distance between perfection already acquired

and the exercise to acquire perfection as there is between the solitary life, if it is embraced as it should be, and the social life. But if the solitary life is embraced without previous exercise, it constitutes a very great danger, unless the grace of God supplies what in others is attained by exercise, as in the case of St. Anthony and St. Benedict".

In resolving the difficulties that he himself raises, the Angelic Doctor rounds out the doctrine with some very interesting clarifications, Here are the difficulties and their answers: 1, a Sacred Scripture says: "Two are better than one, because they achieve better fruit from their work. If one falls, the other picks him up; but woe to the one who falls and has no one to lift him up" (Eccl 4:9-10). (Eccl 4:9-10). Therefore, religious life in community seems more perfect. Answer. This text shows that it is better to be two together than one alone because of the help they can give each other, lifting each other up, encouraging each other, and encouraging each other spiritually. But those who have already attained perfection do not need this help.

2. a Christ says in the Gospel: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there will I be in the midst of them" (Mt 18:20), But there can be nothing better than fellowship.

ness of Christ. Then it seems that it is better to live in community than to live alone. Answer. St. John the Evangelist writes: "He who lives in charity lives in God and God lives in him" (I John 4:16). Consequently, Christ dwells both in the midst of those whom he has gathered together for the love of his neighbor and "in the heart" of those who

are devoted to contemplation for the love of God (cf. Eph 3:17).

3. a The most excellent of the religious vows is that of obedience, and, on the other hand, humility is what pleases God most. But obedience and humility are more likely to be practiced in the common life than in the desert, for St. Jerome says: “In solitude it is easy for pride to grow, one sleeps as much as one wants and does what one wants. On the contrary, he himself assigns the program to the one who lives in community: “Do not do what your will asks of you; eat what they give you; be content with what they offer you; obey those who oppose you; serve your brothers; fear the superior of the monastery as God himself and love him as a father”. So it seems that religious life in community is more perfect than solitary life. Answer, Actual obedience is indispensable to those who need to exercise themselves in perfection under the direction of another. But those who are already perfect “are sufficiently led by the Spirit of God” (cf. Rom. 8:14) and do not need to exercise actual obedience to others. They possess, however, habitual obedience insofar as they are always ready to obey,

4. a The Lord says: “No one lights a light to hide it or to put it under a bushel basket, but on a lampstand” (Le rr,33). But those who live in solitude seem to be hidden, being of no use to men. Therefore, it seems that this way of life is not the most perfect. Response. As St. Augustine says, “no one is hindered from devoting himself to the study of the truth; it is praiseworthy repose”. But “to be put on the candlestick” does not touch the person concerned, but his superiors. “If this burden is not imposed on you,” adds St. Augustine, “consecrate yourself to the contemplation of truth,” to which solitude is so conducive. However, those who lead a solitary life are very useful to humanity. Referring to them, St. Augustine says: “Content with bread given to them at set

times and with water, they live in deserts, enjoying communication with God, to whom they have given themselves with a pure soul. Some believe that they are too disinterested in human things; they do not know to what extent their prayer is useful to us and their example profitable, even if we do not see their bodies".

5. a What goes against the nature of man cannot be proper to the perfection of virtue. But, as Aristotle says, "man is naturally a social animal. Therefore it seems that the solitary life is not more perfect than the social.

Answer. Man may seek solitude for two reasons: either because he cannot bear the company of men on account of the hardness of his soul, and this is the conduct of beasts; or to give himself wholly to divine things, and this reason elevates him above the human condition. That is why Aristotle himself says that "he who departs from the company of men is either a brute or a god," that is, a divine man.

So much for the doctrine of the Angelic Doctor. It is evident that absolute solitude-hermit life-does not suit the great majority of men, precisely because of its almost superhuman perfection. But the solitary or eremitical life is one thing, and the love of solitude and silence, which every soul that seriously aspires to Christian perfection must insistently foster, is quite another. No religious, not even those with a very active life-and perhaps these more than anyone else-must renounce the tendency to procure long periods of solitude and silence, if he does not want to slip insensibly toward lukewarmness and mediocrity in the service of God

and toward the almost inevitable loss of the authentic and effective desire for one’s own sanctification. Basilio de San Pablo, a Passionist, presented at the National Congress of Perfection and Apostolate, held in Madrid in 1956, a beautiful communication on “Solitude as protection of silence: its value and supernatural strength” 2.)

Human value of solitude

2S9. “Does solitude have, above all, a natural or human value? In itself, or in the abstract, as a detachment from the human consortium, no, because it is a mere accident ubi, “where,” which does not in itself affect the substantial reality of things. But that mere relation of our living to a given place may constitute the liberation from an evil, the removal of an obstacle, or the condition for the enjoyment of some good. Loneliness can become a two-edged amia. For the neurasthenic, the misanthrope, the melancholic, the child in years, in science or in virtue, and even, if you will,- for the romantic, it will be an evil. The absolute and perpetual will be recommendable to very few, and perhaps from the purely human point of view, to no one. We have already seen that the solitary is for Aristotle aut bestia, aut Deus, and that for St. Thomas, he can desire it propter saevitiam animi, as well as per hoc quod totaliter divinis rebus inhaereat. Thus, solitude has a value and even constitutes a positive good only when it distances us from an evil, removes an obstacle to attaining a good or places us in a position to obtain it. Solitude comes, above all, to distance us from modern vertigo. The reality of this vertigo is constantly before our eyes, especially in our populous cities. Its best exponent would be the street, with its wide avenues, cars of all makes and shapes, motorcycles, scooters, mopeds, bicycles… launched through them like exhalations; horns calling for passage to accelerate 2 It can be seen

integrated in the Acts of the Congress vol.3 p.5T4-52ó. Our quotation, p.521-525.

428

PILI, Ascetical-mystical aspect of religious life.

The traffic officers regulating the traffic in nervous accesses, the flood of pedestrians anxiously waiting for the light signal to cross these streets, the confluence of avenues with their respective floods of vehicles blocking them for the moment or mixing their floods in agitated confusion, like the rivers in their impetuous currents. To this vertigo of the streets corresponds that of the remaining human activities. Accumulation of appointments, business, attentions, leaving home, long trips. The urgency of having the car at the door, the telephone at hand, the plane at a short distance. Activity, dynamism, vertigo, madness, such is modern life. It will be said that civilization demands this vertigo, with no other solution than to accept it as it comes. Let us then affirm that this civilization is the new Saturn that devours its children. With all the modern advances, the percentage of diseases is not altered in favor, but against our species. Many diseases are diminishing and are even definitively vanquished, but others are increasing considerably and even new ones are appearing every day. Nervous, cardiac and mental illnesses fill sanatoriums, clinics and rest homes, forcing them to be enlarged and multiplied every day. As a brake on these activities, a rest, even momentary, to this fatigue and a restorative to this excessive wear and tear, solitude imposes itself as a peremptory necessity for modern man. Pius XII already spoke of “the heresy of action”. This vertigo too often comes to envelop priests and religious: works of zeal, schools, parishes, preaching, classes, publications and a hundred other activities envelop, agitate and exhaust them. Even from the merely human point of

view, such an excess of activities constitutes a real misfortune, whose only remedy is frequent solitude, venite in desertum locum, requiescite pusillum (Me 6:31). Solitude is universally recognized as a human value, even outside Christianity. Commenting on the words pronounced by the Lord through the prophet Hosea, I will lead her into solitude and speak to her heart (2:14), Cornelius a Lapide, after adducing numerous patristic testimonies on the goods enclosed in solitude, adds that these goods were already perceived, pondered and even enjoyed by the Gentiles themselves. Similar testimonies could be found even among contemporary writers and thinkers. An English proverb says: “One must isolate oneself in order to recover”. The illustrious Argentinean writer Juan de Dios Caballero writes in his Aphorisms: “Do you want to penetrate society? Flee to solitude. Solitude is the focus that allows better vision”. In order not to lengthen these quotations, let us finally mention the testimony of Unamuno: “If you want to acquire ideas, you have to isolate yourself”. This is how all scholars, poets, artists and, in general, all those who have stood out for their ingenuity have always understood it. The accumulation of ideas, the deepening of them, the awakening of genius, the inspirations of art, everything that elevates us above the vulgar and becomes worthy of immortality, is born, developed and perfected in solitude. There one feels closer to God; the unconscious or subconscious awakens and becomes conscious, the message of the stars is collected, the voice of the flowers is heard, the language of the rivers is deciphered, the abysses of the sea are penetrated, the song of the birds is enjoyed, one buries, in a word, the spirit in the immensity of itself, of creation and of God, in order to feel that it is a creator and to produce works worthy of impressing the world of vertigo, which in the end comes to be ashamed of not reaching but a minimum part of the perfect unfolding of life.

Works of genius always bear the unmistakable stamp of solitude. They are not planned, and much less matured and realized, neither in the sports fields, nor in the contracting auctions, nor amidst the mad rush of cars on the avenues of big cities, nor in theaters, nor in bullrings. If, with the means of culture and research resources available today, a greater number of monumental or brilliant works are not produced, it is due to the madness of our life. Let us conclude, therefore, that even to elevate his psychological, intellectual or artistic stature, solitude is necessary for every man, and it is particularly necessary for us, who have been chosen for it and in it we have been educated. b)

Supernatural force

By the supernatural power of solitude we can understand its sanctifying efficacy. How many and what precious things the Fathers, doctors and saints have told us in this regard! And where do such excellencies come from for solitude? Let us enumerate some reasons offered by those who have tasted its delights and reaped its fruits, i.a It disposes us to listen to God’s voice. The first benefit of solitude is to dispose us to listen to the voice of God. God’s supreme gift to the human race was his Word, the Word, given to the world as Savior. These divine accents are still the greatest benefit he bestows on us. The word of God is creative; to speak God to souls is to ennoble them, to fill them with his gifts, to transform them from earthly to heavenly, or, to put it in a single word, to sanctify them. Hence the plea of the Bride of Song of Solomon: “Let your voice ring in my ears” (Song 2:14), and of the holy child Samuel: “Speak, O Lord, for your servant is listening” (1 Kings 3:9), but not in commotione

Dominns (1 Kings 19:11): God is not in the tumult. He is not accustomed to speak amidst the commotion of business, the din of the street, the beats of the “jazz band”. It is necessary to place oneself in convenient conditions to listen for Him to speak; and He speaks in silence and solitude, and with a voice as soft as a zephyr, so that it is not possible to perceive it at the slightest interior or exterior noise that is made? Here came the adduction of a long series of scriptural passages: Abraham, called to solitude to receive his vocation and become the father of believers; Moses, speaking with God and receiving the tablets of the law in the solitude of Sinai; David, affirming that he withdrew as if he had fled from men and remained in solitude (Ps 54:8), and so on, the patriarchs, the prophets, the righteous of all times, up to Jesus Christ himself, who loved and practiced solitude so much; to the apostles, who, recollected and prayerful, awaited the investiture of the Holy Spirit, and, throughout the history of the Church, the founders of religious orders, the most enlightened saints, and up to the present day, the apostles who have achieved the greatest success and gathered the greatest fruits in the vineyard of the Father of families. The spiritual exercises, so highly recommended by the Popes and so eagerly practiced by those who aspire to the perfection corresponding to their state, what else are they but a retreat into solitude and to seek the

The greatest possible interior and exterior silence in order to listen to the voice of God and be transformed by it? 2. Solitude, made fruitful by the divine grace that God communicates to souls in it, also constitutes, in the order of psychological activities, the principal nourishment of the

contemplative life. We need only recall the excellencies of the contemplative life over the active life, the first in Mary, who “chose the better part,” and the other in Martha, who exercised herself in material activities, rather than for the service of Christ. But above these same excellences of contemplation are the activities that proceed ex plenitudine contemplatxom$f since, as the Angelicus adds, “it is more perfect to enlighten than to give light alone, and to communicate to others what has been contemplated, than to contemplate only 3”. Contemplation, singularly when it needs to be so perfect that it overflows into these activities, does not suit man of his purely human condition or endeavor. It needs to be nourished by recollection and habitual contact with God. This is precisely what solitude aims at. Thus, the greater our apostolic activities or spiritual outpouring on our neighbors, the greater must be our contemplation, so that a suitable harmony may reign between the two lives. This is what Pius XII reminded the religious gathered at the Congress in Rome. As our activities increase,” he told them, “faith, prayer, the desire to consecrate ourselves and to consecrate everything to God must also increase: purity of conscience, obedience, patience in our labors, active and awakened love of God and of our neighbor.... The Church asks you with great insistence that your exterior activity be in harmony with your interior life and that both be harmonized in perfect equilibrium. This balance is that of solitude and apostolate. Hence the alternative, at least, between both activities, preparing in solitude for the apostolate and recollecting oneself in solitude, like Jesus Christ and the disciples, after the exercises of the apostolic life. - 3.a Draw supernatural energies. The recommendations to solitude are based on the fact that it has always been a source of supernatural energies. What we have said with respect to the natural value of solitude, proving that in it natural energies of reflection, culture, artistic inspiration or philosophical genius

are accumulated and recovered, must be affirmed with greater reason with respect to supernatural energies. The source of these energies is not our natural faculties, but the divine grace poured upon them, and it is precisely in solitude that it pours them out. All spiritual souls who, like the apostles, have appeared as transfigured in the midst of the world, have had, like them, their respective cenacle, where they have been filled with the Holy Spirit. What are the houses of religious formation, the long years of aspirancy, novitiate and scholasticate, with their intense spiritual and religious life? What are houses of formation, religious, the long years of aspirancy, novitiate and scholasticate, with their intense spiritual and religious life, but the accumulation of supernatural energies, filling the vessel of souls, so that, when they appear teaching or preaching, it can happen that the teaching or preaching overflows ex plenitudine contemplationis? The solitude sought and chosen as an element of sanctification is not something purely negative. In it God communicates. God communicates to souls his lights, his loving designs for mankind, the graces that develop all the graces of the soul, the graces of the soul, and the graces of the soul.

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The virtues, the zeal that makes us see as our own the offenses of God, the salvation of souls, the interests of the Church and everything that concerns the divine glory. In solitude, heaven opens over the recollected soul to communicate to it those divine and loving intuitions that constitute divine contemplation and are like a foretaste of the glory to come. What a pity that the environment that surrounds us at times, the excess of external activities at others, and laziness or deviation at others, deprive the religious of the benefits of monastic solitude! It is a deficit that cannot be compensated for by anything. What St. Paul said about charity, that even if he had all the other virtues and possessed all the charisms, if he lacked it, he was nothing in the eyes of God, we can apply it proportionally to the spirit of solitude in the religious. No matter how much he works, writes, teaches, preaches, organizes, or thunders the world with his fame, if he does not love solitude and does not seek it with all eagerness, as reparation for his failures, rest for his fatigues and source of supernatural energies, he will be nothing but a ghost of an apostle and a religious)).

2”

Silence

Silence is another great means or instrument of perfection. Intimately related to solitude, to which it prepares the ground and of which it is the effect, silence has always merited the highest praise from the great masters of the spirit and has been practiced with endearing love by all souls of deep interior life. Elizabeth of the Trinity eight days after her entry into the Carmel of Dijon, to the question: “Which point of the Rule do you prefer?”, the famous Carmelite wrote without hesitation: “Silence”. 4 There are three kinds of silence: exterior, interior and the “divine

silence” of contemplative souls. Let us examine them separately. a)

The exterior silence

291* It consists in abstaining from speaking-other than strictly necessary-and in the cessation of all kinds of external noises. This silence is often impossible. In the case of a purely contemplative order and in a monastery far from the noise of large modern cities, it can be observed with relative ease. But in orders and congregations of active life-colleges, hospitals, etc.-it is almost impossible, outside the hours expressly dedicated to prayer and recollection. Even in the latter, however, it is necessary to nourish the love of silence by practicing it severely at the hours appointed by the rule and by speaking as little as possible,

La doctrine spirituelle de soeur Elisabeth de la Trinité 11 ed. (1954) p.4*.

The practice of silence is not only a matter of the time and place where it is permitted to speak, but it is also not misanthropy or discourtesy. In this regard, the famous Father Grou 5 writes: “It is an abuse to believe that the practice of silence is suitable only for souls consecrated to God in the cloister. It is necessary for anyone who wants to become interior. Jesus Christ did not refer only to religious when he said that for every idle word we will have to give an account on the day of judgment. Itching and itching to speak is an infallible sign of a light and dissipated soul. I am very suspicious that after leaving a useless conversation, one can easily enter into recollection, or pray or do spiritual reading with the peace and calm required for it to be profitable”.

It is well known how insistently the apostle James insists in his Catholic epistle on silence and the bridling of the tongue: “You know, my dearest brothers, that every man should be quick to listen, slow to speak…” (1:19). (1,19). “If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue, he is deceived, for his religion is vain” (1:26). “If anyone does not sin in word, he is a perfect man” (3:2). “The tongue, though it is a small member, dares great things. Behold, a little fire is enough to burn a great forest. The tongue is also a fire, a world of iniquity. Placed between our limbs, the tongue defiles the whole body, and inflamed by hell, it in turn inflames our whole life. Every kind of wild beast, bird, reptile and sea animal can be tamed and has been tamed by man; but the tongue no one can tame, it is an unstoppable scourge and is full of deadly poison. With it we bless the Lord and our Father, and with it we curse men, who are made in the image of God. From the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. And this, my brethren, must not be so: does the fountain send forth from the same pipe both sweet and bitter water?” (3,5-11). “Do not murmur against one another, brethren” (4:11). “Do not complain, brethren, murmur against one another, lest you incur judgment; for the Judge is at the gates” (5:9).

Aside from these grave disadvantages against fraternal charity pointed out by the Apostle James, it is incredible the number of evils and damages that the lack of silence and control over our tongue brings to souls who aspire to perfect union with God. A modern author presents the following long list, which is not, however, exhaustive 6: “1) It makes it impossible in every way to have a familiar, affectionate, and loving relationship with God, and with that, any fervent interior life. God does not make himself felt among the hustle and bustle of men. For the most delicate voice of the Holy Spirit to be heard, it is necessary to have a profound silence of all that is base and earthly. And as familiarity with

God diminishes, zeal for his glory and efficacy in moving hearts must necessarily decrease. 5 Cf. Father Grou, Manuel des ámes intérieures (Paris 1901), p. 94. 6 Fr. Zabaleta, S. I., in Acts of the National Congress of Perfection and Apostolate vol. 3 (Madrid 1958) p. 472-73*.

2) It makes one fall into many sins: In multiloquio non deerit peccatum (Prov 10:19; Eccli 23:17). Detraction, slander, backbiting, backbiting, revelations of secrets, imprudence, exaggerations, lies, flattery, altercations, insults, discourtesies and who knows how many other things. The apostle James does not hesitate to call the tongue ignis et universitas iniquitatum (3:5), and he reproaches it for its evils very harshly in a good part of his letter. 3) He also incurs in innumerable follies and follies. In multis sermonibus invenietur stultitia (Eccl 5:2), to what nonsense, emptyness, ridiculousness, foolishness, foolishness, buffoonery, bad jokes and the like, so unbecoming of a man consecrated to God, does charlatanism drag us into! (Prov 15:2; 29:20). 4) It encourages excessive familiarity and, with it, companionship and camaraderie and particular friendships, pests of religions and ruins of charity, obedience, discipline and chastity. In the cliques and gangs that are born therefrom, how disrespectfully they are flayed in the bosom of the confraternity, not only to equals, inferiors, but even to superiors and representatives of God! How badly is union and fraternal charity often lost! It wastes a lot of time, of which the apostle and the religious are so much in need for prayer and study. He who kills time chatting, what diligence will he put later in studying dogma and morals, Sacred Scripture, the Holy Fathers and ascetics? And without that, what will be his sermons and

conversations? ó) He easily drags, and much more in our times, when there are so many means for it, to all kinds of lightness, dissolution and frivolity, inflaming little by little the thirst for novelties that will be satiated in the newspapers, on the radio, in the movies, in the visits and in the walks in the streets, so that the religious spirit is spilled and completely lost and one is made to live of impressions and in continuous agitation and pastimes. Something to which the annoyance and nervousness of our days drags us with greater force. 7) It is the origin and, at the same time, an indication of the lack of character and personality, which causes one to let oneself be led adrift by others wherever they want. Nothing could be more opposed to the character and the integrity of the apostle who has to serve others as a guide and not be their plaything". b)

Inner silence

292. More important than exterior silence is interior silence, that is, the perfect calm and tranquility of the internal powers, principally of the imagination and memory. Here is how Father Grou 7 describes it: "But it is not enough to keep silence with other people; it is necessary to keep it with oneself, not to entertain oneself with one's imagination, not to remember what one has said or heard, not to occupy oneself with useless thoughts - thoughts that are about the past or the future. How could God make himself heard by a soul in the midst of such great interior dissipation? If it allows itself to be thus poured out on all kinds of objects, how can it be able to collect itself in order to pray? It is no small thing to make oneself master of one's own imagination to the point of fixing it on the present, on what we are presently thinking, on what we are thinking, on what we are thinking, on what we are thinking, on what we are thinking, on what we are thinking.

I know very well that we are not free to have these kinds of thoughts, but we are free not to subject our hearts to them, to despise them, and not to take them into account at all. I know very well that we are not free to have this kind of thoughts; but we are free not to subject our heart to them, to despise them and not to take them into account at all. When they are the consequence of some sorrow, of some rebellion of self-love, of some desire, we are free to offer to God the sacrifice of this sorrow, to appease that rebellion, to repress that desire. The exercise of interior mortification is an effective, irreplaceable means of arriving at this perfect silence of the soul that disposes us to an intimate communication with God.

Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity dedicated one of the sublime elevations of her last spiritual retreat to this interior silence, so dear to contemplative souls. Here are her own words 8: “In the silence of the powers. “My life is always in my hands” (Ps 118:109). Here is what was sung in the soul of my Master, here is also why, in the midst of all anguish, he remained the Calm and the Strong. “My soul is always in my hands!” What does this mean, but that full possession of himself in the presence of the Peaceful One? There is another song of Christ that I would like to repeat incessantly: “I will preserve my strength for you” (Ps 58:10). My rule tells me: “Your strength shall be in silence”. It seems to me, then, that to preserve my strength for the Lord consists in achieving the unity of my whole being through the silence of love, in possessing this simple gaze that allows the light to radiate fully. A soul that quarrels with itself, that occupies itself with its sensibilities, that pursues a useless thought, any desire…, this soul disperses its forces, it is not totally

ordered to God, its lyre does not vibrate in unison. And the Master, when he touches it, cannot extract divine harmonies from it. There is still too much of the human, it is a dissonance. The soul that still keeps something in its inner realm, in which all its powers are not “enclosed” in God, cannot be a perfect praise of glory. It is not in a state to sing without interruption the “great song” of which St. Paul speaks, because unity does not reign in it; and instead of continuing its praise through all things in simplicity, it needs to gather without ceasing the strings of its instrument, scattered a little everywhere. How indispensable is this beautiful interior unity to the soul that wants to live here below the life of the blessed, that is, of the simple beings, of the spirits! It seems to me that the Master alluded to this when he spoke to Mary Magdalene of the unum necessariurri (Le 10:42). The eye of her soul, illuminated by the light of faith, had recognized her God through the veil of humanity; and, in the silence, in the unity of her powers, she “heard” (Le 10:39) the word that he addressed to her; she could sing: “My soul is always in my hands”, and even this little word: Nescivi !t I did not know. Yes, she did not know anything, but HE could make noise, agitate around her: Nescivi! One could accuse her: Nescivi!; neither her honor, nor the external things could make her come out of her sacred silence. It is the same for the soul that has entered the fortress of holy recollection. The eye of her soul, open to the clarities of faith, discovers her God present, living 8 Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity,

in M. Philipon, o.c. p.319-20.

Last retreat of tlaudem gloriae”, day two. You can see

in her. In turn, she remains there, present before Him, in the beautiful simplicity that He preserves with jealous care. Then the agitations from without, the storms from within, can come upon her; she can be touched in her point of honor: Nescivi! God can hide Himself, withdraw His sensitive grace from her: Nescivi! And she can even say with St. Paul: “I have sacrificed everything for His love” (Phil 3:8). Then his Master is free; free to hide himself, free to give himself “to his measure” (Eph 4:7): and the soul, thus simplified, unified, becomes the throne of the Immutable One, since unity is the throne of the Most Blessed Trinity”. c)

The “divine silence

293. Above the exterior and interior silence of which we have just spoken, there is another silence, incomparably more intimate and profound, which touches the deepest and most intimate part of the soul. For lack of an adequate human terminology, the mystics usually call it “divinatory silence”, because in it, in fact, everything is heavenly and divine. Here is how Father Philipon describes it, regarding Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity: “There is another silence that the soul cannot produce by its own activity, but which God himself works in it, if it remains always faithful, and which constitutes one of the highest fruits of the Holy Spirit: the “divine silence” of the graphic of St. John of the Cross, The powers of the soul are no longer dispersed in search of things. The soul knows only God: it is unity…. St. John of the Cross, in a famous passage, alludes to the silence of the Trinity: “The Father spoke one word, which was his Son, and this word always speaks in eternal silence…” Sister Elizabeth has discovered in this silence of the Trinity the exemplar of her own: “May a profound silence be made in the soul, an echo of that which is sung in the Trinity”. The transforming union makes one enter into this silence of God. In the soul, everything is silent: nothing of the earth, no

light other than that of the Word, no love other than eternal Love. The soul is clothed in God’s way of being. Its life, surpassing and dominating from above all the agitations of created things, participates in the immutable life, according to the beautiful expression of Sister Elizabeth: “Immobile and tranquil, as if it were already in eternity”. By a special touch of the Holy Spirit, of the most intimate and secret, her life is transported to the immutable and silent Trinity. Still through faith, here below, but by one of the highest effects of the gift of wisdom, the soul lives in God; in God’s way, all transported in Him. It hears nothing but the eternal Word: the generation of the Word, the exhalation of Love. The whole universe is for it as if it did not exist. To this degree, silence is the supreme refuge of the soul in the face of the mystery of God. “David speaks of this profound silence when he says: Silence is your praise. Yes, it is the most beautiful praise, since it is that which is sung eternally in the bosom of the quiet Trinity.” “So that nothing can make me leave this beautiful interior silence,” writes Sister Elizabeth, “the same condition is always required: the same isolation, the same separation, the same detachment. If my desires, my fears, my joys, my sorrows, if all the movements that come from $ P. Philipon, o.c. p.7óss.

these four passions are not perfectly ordered to God, I will not be a solitary: there will be noise in me. There is need, then, of appeasement, the slumber of the powers, the unity of being. “Listen, my daughter, and listen carefully: forget your people and your father’s house, and the king will fall in love with your beauty” (Ps 44:11). It seems to me that this call is an invitation to silence: “Listen, listen carefully”. But in order to listen, it is necessary to forget his father’s house,

that is, everything that refers to the natural life, to that life to which the Apostle alludes when he says: “If you live according to the flesh, you will die” (Rom 8:13). To forget his people is even more difficult, I believe, because that people is all this world that is part of ourselves: it is our sensibility, our memories, our impressions, etc., our self, in a word. It is necessary to forget it, to suppress it. And when the soul has made this rupture, when it has freed itself from all this, the king falls in love with its beauty, because beauty is unity, at least the unity of God. Seeing the Creator the beautiful silence that reigns in his creature, considering it all recollected in its inner solitude, he falls in love with its beauty. And He transports it to that immense, infinite solitude, to that spacious place sung by the prophet, which is none other than Himself”. This supreme solitude establishes the soul in the very silence of the Trinity”.
Appendix: Silence at work

294, We do not want to end this chapter without taking up some precious suggestions of Cardinal Wyszynski on the need for silence in the midst of the most burdensome occupations and labors. Here are 10: “The best example of the silence of the interior life is in the house of Nazareth or in the cenacle on the day of Pentecost, awaiting the Comforter. The power of the Church was affirmed and grew in the great silence of the catacombs, where the first Christians, the martyrs, prostrated themselves before God in the light of the candles. Every great work, every power of holiness is born in silence and recollection. The deeper the spiritual life, the greater the inclination to silence. When the saints begin to speak less and less, they become fond of silence, and it is when they hear better what “the Spirit of God says to the Church”. They become “slow to speak”. Man penetrates into the divine silence, into the divine voice that allows itself to be heard precisely in the midst of silence. Something analogous happens in the world of science. Wise

men who set out to achieve something seek solitude, they force themselves to silence “until the harvest”. A talkative, dissipated scientist, too fond of worldly affairs, instills distrust. To think before speaking and writing requires to withdraw, to shut oneself up in oneself… .. “A great silence” must reign, not only around us, but also, and above all, within us. Tired of chaos and noise, and desirous of silence, people often seek it around them. In reality, silence is born, more than from our environment, from ourselves. To be silent and concentrated does not mean to be in a peaceful conventual place. That would be a great facility, without solving the problem. To be silent means to enjoy tranquility in one’s own spirit. It is possible to have peace in one’s soul in the midst of the tumult of the street, of the noise,

Cf. Cardinal Wyszynski,

Our quote. p.202$s.

El espíritu del trabajo (Colección Patmosn.8o, Madrid 1958).

In the din of a factory hall; and this is precisely the silence that we must know how to conquer. It is obvious, of course, that we can and must limit the noise of external life, that we can refrain from producing* noise ourselves, but this does not solve the problem if silence is lacking in us. The path that must lead us to it is none other than that of isolation and solitude, but we must not overvalue them, all the more so if we take into account the present forms of social life. Because achieving solitude in daily work is practically impossible today, and it is not a necessary requirement to conquer silence. Isolation does not mean or decide the perfection of life; it can present an auxiliary factor, a good

instrument of the spiritual life. On the other hand, man sometimes has the best conditions for being alone, and yet he carries a hell within himself. One can be alone without being lonely. In daily work, total solitude would be something abnormal, since the worker must feel as united to God as to his neighbor. Perfect solitude at work will consist, then, not in distancing oneself from others, but in keeping oneself in the divine presence. The source of true solitude and silence is not the conditions and quality of work, but intimate contact with God. The Lord, in fact, fills the whole world: in every detail of our activity we will find divine traces: in things, in people, in the forces we use. We are continually immersed in God: “In him we live, we move and we are”. To be alone, then, means to participate in the divine solitude. We have to conquer this difficult art in our normal work, as an indispensable condition of our silence. To turn to God, to be alone with Him, prepares the soul for the conquest of peace, a precious help in external work, even the noisiest and most agitated. Silence, thus understood, can be found in the street, in the din of factory work, in the labors of the field, because it is carried within oneself, thanks to recollection, of which it is a faithful companion. Undoubtedly, the silence of the tongue is also advisable, within reasonable limits. Human silence opens the way to the word of God; when man is silent, the voice of the Lord is heard clearly. Listening to Him, we will keep silence even in the midst of our words. The source of silence is in us, as is the source of restlessness “Everything that surrounds man produces far less noise than man himself”. The true tumult is the echo that external things find in the soul. Often we are unjust to the outside world, saying that it is it that forces us to dispersion and noise. But the desires of our soul, the disorder in thought, the contradictory tendencies, all that creates great bewilderment in us: only the intimate posture adopted consciously can close the passage of the spirit to any kind of filth; if that door can be opened, it can also be

closed. “The voice of one crying in the wilderness” is to announce to the soul: “Prepare the way of the Lord”. To take root in us, silence requires the help of patience, which will cushion the effects of sadness; of perseverance and constancy, which will combat restlessness and instability in intentions, plans and projects; of long-suffering, which will overcome restlessness in work. Humility and dis:nterest will fight in us against prurience.

to focus the attention of others on ourselves by means of a showy behavior. Thanks to these virtues, our work acquires that subtle property of the work that matures in secret, like the flower in the bud, until its full development. The desire of fame, the propaganda of one’s own works that, sometimes, do not go beyond being projects, generally deprive the work of peace and solidity, because there is in it an excessive yearning for spectacularty, applause and glory, because the reward is sought before the sun sets. The spirit of silence demands humility and disinterestedness; the spirit of peace, the fruit of charity and justice, establishes order and harmony, eliminating the conflicts and discrepancies of the spirit of quarrelling. This is the work that silence does in the soul of the one who works. In comparison with it, the silence of the external environment loses importance. Of course, it is indispensable to avoid superfluous noise and disorder in the activity; but if one has not achieved inner silence, the tranquility of his environment would be of little use to him”.

Chapter

ii

295* The subject that we are going to deal with in the present chapter is closely related to what we have explained in the two previous chapters. Without a profound recollection and a habitual interior life, the prayer of the religious would be little less than useless, and solitude and silence, whose primary purpose is none other than to facilitate recollection and the intimate practice of the interior life, would have no meaning whatsoever. In spite of their intimate concomitances and mutual interferences, we will present separately the two aspects that constitute the headline of this chapter. 1*

The recollection

In a theoretical-practical meditation plan, we will present the following three points1: i.°.

Recollection, a general means of sanctification.

2.0

Goods produced by the religious.

3.0

Damages resulting from the lack of recollection. i.°.

Recollection, a general means of sanctification

296. Three are the principal effects of recollection as a general means of perfection: it brings us closer to God, if we have distanced ourselves from Him; it removes many temptations from us and, by the same token, it preserves us from sin.

1 Cf. P. Chaignon, S. L, Méditations religicuses (Paris iw) p.ro3-rrS, whose magnificent doctrine we collect in the present pages.

a) Recollection brings us closer to God. It is the first step, so to speak, of a soul returning from sin to grace or from lukewarmness to fervor. How does the prodigal son return to his father's house or the sinner to virtue? Both feel called back to the interior in one of those happy moments when God speaks to the depths of a troubled conscience: "How long," he says to them, "will you remain outside yourselves, strangers to your own hearts? (cf. Is 46:8) 2. Obeying this divine call, they collect themselves within themselves and surrender at last to reason and faith: "And coming to himself, he said,..." (Le 15:17). Their eyes are opened: the world, pleasures, business, life, death... are shown in their own reality. They realize their mistakes, they discover their crimes and the damage they have done to themselves. It is for them like an apparition of the holiness, justice and goodness of God that enlightens and overwhelms them. His holiness makes them ashamed of their disorders; His goodness, of their monstrous ingratitude; His justice makes them tremble..., and from great sinners they become great saints. Recollection began this tremendous transformation. Is it a soul that, after having been faithful, has fallen into relaxation? The same means will have the same efficacy. Let

him recollect himself deeply before this divine oracle: “I know your works and that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were cold or hot, but because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I am ready to vomit you out of my mouth” (Rev. 3:15-16). Let him deepen these words, let him consider where the one whom the Lord “has vomited out of his mouth” is going to end up. However little docile he may be to the inspirations of grace, he will eventually come out of his fatal sleep.

b)

To recollect oneself is to call back into oneself one’s own imagination, memory, understanding, will, all the powers of one’s soul that were poured out, in order to fix them on God and on divine things. To live in recollection is to keep oneself in a sweet and gentle, but continuous attention to the operations of grace in order to second them, and to the movements of nature in order to direct or repress them. A recollected soul is, then, a soul withdrawn from creatures and seeking God, His will and desires, in order to conform itself to Him in everything. It is understood without effort of how much.

2 The exact text of Isaiah is this: “Remember this and understand it: reflect again, you transgressors” (Nacar-Colunga version),

This interior solitude, which the saints have known how to find in the midst of the most varied cares and occupations, will free him from temptations. A dissipated soul continually goes out through all the doors of the senses. It is always to be found among things here below, in search of some

natural satisfaction. It wants to see everything, to hear everything; it offers its heart to all the inspirations that are placed before it. It fills itself with vain ideas, with false judgments; it scarcely distinguishes between what conscience authorizes and what it forbids; it imprudently enters upon a thousand dangerous occasions. Is not this, perhaps, to go to meet temptations? More prudent, the recollected soul “has taken refuge in Yahweh, and in the Most High is his asylum; calamity shall not come upon him, nor shall the plague come near his tent” (Ps 90:9-ro). Never losing sight of the adorable witness of his actions, of all his thoughts and affections, he reads in his eyes what he approves or condemns. God himself shows her the path she must follow; “I will teach you and instruct you in the way you should go; I will be your counselor and my eyes will be upon you” (Ps 31:8). The soul watches over its imagination and its senses, lest death assail it: “Death has come up through our windows and entered our dwelling places” (1 Pet 9:2r). To avoid this, what a good guardian is recollection!
c) Recollection preserves us from sin. Our life is more or less pure according to the degree to which our recollection is more or less perfect. Sin is a work of darkness and weakness: it is an error and a failure. What, then, is necessary to preserve us from it? Two things that recollection can provide us with: light and strength. A man who is recollected, in fact, possessing himself, enjoys the full exercise of his reason and his faith; he is under the rule of truth and not of passion. He discovers sin wherever it is really found, whatever disguise it may wear; and he sees it as it is, in all its odious deformity. Why? Because, in a certain sense, he continually sees God: his greatness, his power, his justice, his goodness: “Your eyes shall behold the king in his beauty, and you shall see the earth that stretches far away” (Is 33:17). What a bright day is made within the soul by the memory of a God present, witness and judge of our most secret intentions! How this divine gaze sustains and strengthens, at the same time as it

enlightens! How it makes us triumph over all our temptations, however seductive they may be! At the very moment when the soul gathers up the

he discovers, he cries out like Joseph with holy indignation: Quomodo possum? (Gen 39:9), How can I offend my God, commit such a great wickedness, sin against the Lord and sin in His sight? Is such a thing possible? To rebel against Him who has so much right to my obedience, to trample on His law while I am under the impression of the respect His majesty inspires in me, while His beauty ravishes me, and His goodness moves me, and His justice makes me tremble? Oh, no! I cannot do that. We, alas, can do it too much-our enemy knows it very well-when dissipation drives these wholesome thoughts away from us. Hence Holy Scripture ordinarily attributes falling into sin to forgetfulness of God, and perseverance in righteousness to the remembrance of His presence. “Thou hast cast me out of thy spirit,” says the Lord to Jerusalem, “thou hast forgotten me, O unfaithful city-oblita es mei-(Ier 13:25); and from thence comes that flood of crimes which I am compelled to punish by a flood of disasters. Daniel does not explain otherwise the audacity of the two impudent old men: “Their judgment was perverted, they did not look up to heaven, nor did they remember the judgments of God” (Dan 13:9). David assigns the same cause to all the disorders of the evildoers. They would like to persuade themselves that God thinks no more of them than they think of God; they forget that terrible avenger of all iniquity, and therefore their ways are always full of wickedness: “And the wicked says in his folly, ‘He hears not, there is no God! These are his thoughts; his ways are always wicked” (Ps 10:4-5). But I,” adds the psalmist, “keep your

precepts and your teachings, for all my ways are before your eyes" (Ps 118:168). How often, with the same psalmist, have we envied the happiness of those whose life is spent in peace and innocence: Beati immaculati in viale But we could all obtain this happiness, and the purity of our soul would constitute a sanp" tuary less unworthy of God if we were to establish and preserve ourselves in habitual recollection. We must carefully avoid everything that makes us go out of ourselves, distrusting everything that pours out of us, sometimes under the guise of good. But in vain will we work to guard our soul if God himself does not help us to guard it; "Unless the LORD guards the city, in vain do his watchmen keep watch over it" (Ps 126:1). Therefore we must ask him to keep us "as the apple of his eye" (Ps 16:8). If God always keeps us close to him, always busy with him, we will be strong against the evil of the world.

all our enemies and we will have the audacity to challenge them to separate us from him: "If God is with us, who can be against us? (Rom 8:31). 2.0

Goods that recollection produces in the religious

297* They are many and very great, but they can be reduced to these two fundamental ones: it makes one progress rapidly in holiness and gives one a happiness similar to that of heaven. a) It makes one progress rapidly in holiness. And this for three main reasons: by the graces it attracts us, by the merits with which it fills our days and by the virtues it makes us practice. 1) God puts his joy in enriching us with his gifts. He himself incites us to ask him for them, and when he sees us ready to make them bear

fruit, he pours them out upon us with unbounded generosity. But in order to attract to us the gifts of heaven and make them bear fruit, the best disposition is that of interior recollection, when the soul seeks to be alone with God for no other purpose than to adore, bless and invoke Him. This soul is, so to speak, always in prayer, since its spirit and heart are always lifted up towards God. Its life being nothing but an uninterrupted succession of holy desires, it is equivalent to a continuous prayer: Continuum desiderium, continua oratio (St. Augustine). Asking always, he always receives; all the more so because he fulfills the conditions required to obtain what is asked for: attention, respect, trust, perseverance. What treasures of light and affection he discovers in the Lord's Prayer: Our Father! From the moment she collects herself, she is in full possession of herself: she has no need to search her own heart. The formulas of conversation with God, of adoration, of thanksgiving, of supplication, which Jesus Christ and the Church teach her in her marvelous liturgy, are not for her vain words: she enters at once into the sentiments they express, she prays "in spirit and in mind" (cf. 1 Cor 14:15). Just as dissipation rejects divine goods or hinders their salutary influence, so recollection draws them to us and favors their efficacy. God offers his grace more abundantly to the attentive spirit that perceives it, and accepts in the act the free heart that is always ready to follow its movement. 2) By attracting heavenly gifts upon us, recollection multiplies our good works, or rather, upon the free heart that is always ready to follow their movement.

naturalizes all our works. This thought, "God sees me, and He will be very pleased if I seek to please Him," has I know not what powerful energy to rouse the soul from its slumber,

purify its intentions, electrify it, and inflame it with ardor; and is it not this, perhaps, that gives great value to our most ordinary actions? Let us not commit the folly and folly of working for nothing and with pure loss, working for the world or following only our natural inclinations, when we could have done so, with immense benefit and profit, working for God and in a manner worthy of God. 3) From recollection, finally, springs and is born detachment from creatures, in order to be attached only to God, outside of whom nothing is seen but nothingness. It also gives rise to a distaste for the things of the earth: shall we gather dust when we have found diamonds? "How vile the earth seems to me when I contemplate heaven," said St. Ignatius of Loyola. From recollection also comes that patience, that heroic courage in trials of which the great saints have given us so many examples: "I know that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing in comparison with the glory that is to be revealed in us" (Rom 8:18). Recollection also leads to complete conformity to God's will: we want only what God wants, all that he wants and how he wants it. In a word: that life of faith which, being nothing other than the continuous exercise of all the virtues, constitutes true holiness, is the fruit of perfect recollection. What kind of strange blindness can make us tremble before a life of recollection and solitude in which we would fully encounter God, as if we did not have in Him, raised to infinity, all that we can dream of and aspire to? b) It provides a happiness similar to that of heaven. Recollection, in fact, makes us partakers of the goods whose full possession constitutes eternal life: perfect innocence, unalterable repose, sovereign joy, fruitive enjoyment of God. In the first place, nothing defiled can enter heaven. Sin is impossible there, since the blessed one contemplates God himself face to face in all the magnificence of his beauty and charms, and, contemplating him, loves him with all the strength of his soul. But the thought of God present in our heart, unveiling to us some

rays of his globe, is impossible in him, since the blessed one contemplates God himself face to face in all the magnificence of his beauty and charms.

In heaven, love is enough; here on earth, love joins with fear to keep us from doing anything that might displease him. In heaven, love is enough; here on earth, love joins with fear to keep us from doing anything that might displease him. "The remembrance of God preserves from sin" (St. Jerome). Secondly, just as in heaven nothing can disturb the peace of the elect, since they dwell in a city that God guards and in which He Himself is the wall, so the recollection of the soul in itself, the habit of thinking of God present, calms all the passions, suppresses the useless desires that disturb it, banishes all alarms. What could we fear, thinking that he is always at our side, to defend us, an almighty protector who has for us the affections of a father and the tenderness of a mother, and who covers us with his benevolence as with an impenetrable shield? (c£ Ps 5,13). A pious anchorite was asked what was the reason for the profound serenity that always appeared on his countenance: "I have God," he replied, "and having him I have everything, and no one can take my treasure from me. St. John Chrysostom was threatened with banishment; without showing the least emotion, he repeated these words of David: "All the earth is the Lord's" (Ps 23:1); even if I am sent to the farthest region, to the wildest district, I will always find God, my best friend. " *But here is the height of happiness for the recollected soul* Having exhorted us to remain in his love (Io 15:9)-which we do by recollection, which directs all our thoughts and affections towards him-he immediately adds: "This I tell you so that I may rejoice in his love, that I may rejoice in his

love, and that I may rejoice in his love," he says.I tell you this so that I may rejoice in you and that your joy may be full" (Io 15:11). Recollection-in effect-introduces us to this sacred intimacy with the Lord which consists in a communication of his own joy and an anticipatory taste of future glory. St. Augustine spoke from experience when he said: "He who enters into You, my God, by the interior life and the spirit of prayer, enters into the joy of his Lord; he will have no fear and will find himself optimally in the one who is optimal". Let us read and meditate often on this beautiful passage from the Imitation of Christ "Learn to despise the outward things and give yourself to the inward things, and you will see the kingdom of God come upon you. The kingdom of God is peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ will come to you and fill you with consolations if you prepare for Him a dwelling place worthy of Him. All his glory and beauty is 3 Kempis, imitation of Christ 1.2 c.i.

He often visits the inner man, sweetly converses with him, fills him with his consolations and deep peace and treats him with stupendous familiarity.... Let Christ, then, enter into your heart and close the entrance to all other things.", 3.0

Damages resulting from the lack of recollection

298. Three are the fundamentals: useless life, full of suffering and full of dangers. a)

The life of the religious without recollection is, when

There are sins of omission, just as there are sins of commission. Not only can a soul be condemned for the sins

it has committed, but also for the good which it omitted and which it was obliged not to omit. The branch cannot produce fruit unless it is united to the vine, from which it receives its sap. Similarly, we condemn ourselves to complete sterility if we separate ourselves from Jesus Christ, not only by sin, but also by dissipation and forgetfulness of a life lacking in recollection: “I am the vine and you are the branches” (Acts 15:5). If we banish Him from our spirit and our heart, leaving no place in them except for creatures; if we oppose the interior direction that He would like to imprint on our soul, is this not equivalent to separating ourselves from Him and rejecting the life-giving sap of His grace? Let us listen and meditate attentively on these words of the Son of God: “He who abides in me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for without me you can do nothing. He who does not abide in me is cast out like a branch and withers, and they are gathered together and thrown into the fire to burn” (Acts 15:5-6). There is no middle ground for him,” says St. Augustine, “aut vitis, aut ignis, either the vine or the fire”. Sad image of the religious who gives himself to dissipation. He is of no use in the hands of the Lord for the fulfillment of his merciful designs. He belongs to that numerous class of men who have no understanding, or whose understanding is vain, since they do not use it to seek God (cf. Ps 13:2-3). He has become completely useless and sterile before God. Useless for the glory of God, useless for the sanctification of his neighbor, useless for himself, how many regrets the dissipated religious accumulates for the hour of death! With what bitterness and despair he will then say to himself: “God withdrew me from the world so that I could give myself more freely to his service, and I went back into the world because of the frivolity of my thoughts! I could have enriched myself in a thousand ways, and…. I have done nothing: less, useless.

PJIL Ethical-mythical aspect of religious life

I am going to appear before God empty-handed! Instead of

What was the use of so many hustles and bustles and movements, if in all of them I sought only myself? A glass of cold water given to a poor person in the name of Jesus Christ would be more useful to me now than all my vain occupations: Ego dixi: vacuum laboravi: “I said to myself, I have labored in vain, in vain and for nothing have I consumed my strength” (Is 49:4). b).

The life of the religious without recollection is filled with

Unable to find the happiness he seeks in external things, his soul is always full of restlessness and torment. At the time of the storm, the sea hurls its waves with impetuosity against the cliff of the coast where they crash violently; and the coasts, in their turn, hurl them upon the sea with the same violence. This continual clash and perpetual conflict gives us some idea of the unhappy state of a soul dissipated and agitated by the passions, especially when it is the soul of a religious. Finding within herself nothing but shame and remorse, the fruit of her infidelities, she flees from herself, rushing towards the objects placed before her, in search of a peace which her disordered interior refuses her. But very soon, realizing her deception by the annoyance and disgust that these false goods cause her, she feels herself thrown away from this external torment and forced to re-enter herself. Always thrown outward and always pushed inward, never finding rest, neither within nor without. What a terrible situation! St. Augustine rightly writes: of sufferings.

“It is a punishment of your justice, my God, and an effect of your mercy, that he who turns away from you to seek in creatures a good which you alone can give him, who are the

sovereign good and the good of all goods, instead of the satisfaction he seeks, should find nothing but sorrow and affliction, and that his fault should become a torture for him."

Even in the midst of blindness and madness one has lucid moments. Even if one tries to stun oneself, one does not cease to be a rational man at times. And in those moments of lucidity and reason, frightful considerations present themselves to the spirit: how not to cast, in spite of oneself, a look full of uneasiness on the eternal future and not to address bitter reproaches to oneself when comparing what one is with what one should be? If the recollected religious encounters contradictions and obstacles on his path, he readily consoles himself with God. How many sorrows does a good prayer, a

fervent communion! But in all these things that constitute the delights of the recollected religious, the dissipated religious finds nothing but anguish and pain or bitterness. c)

The life of the religious without recollection is filled with

Dissipation, snatching our thoughts from the truths of the faith, deprives us also of the light and strength that come from them* By withdrawing from grace, it prevents us from appreciating those we have already received and opens the heart to all seductions and gives it over without defense to the spirit of darkness; thus disposing it to all kinds of sins and to hardening in sin. Can one conceive of a more alarming state in order to eternal salvation? Without recollection, the exercises of piety are omitted or badly done; if one does not pray or prays badly, the fountain of

divine blessings dries up; the interior spirit, that is to say, life, is lacking in all our works. The soul has become the barren fig tree wounded by the divine anathema, the branch separated and cast out of the vine; it has been as it were expelled from the paternal bosom of that particular providence with which God watches over those who love him. She no longer counts, in order to protect herself from her enemies, on those graces of predilection which are the reward of exquisite fidelity. of dangers.

To escape this misfortune," writes Thomas of Kempis,4 "cease, my soul, to stray among the things of nature and of the senses, where you have found nothing but folly, lies and vanity. Re-enter into yourself and take up God once and for all. You will find in Him what you seek uselessly outside of Him; for, being the sovereign good, how could He cease to be the source of all consolation? Return, poor dove, return to Noah, return again to the holy ark. Retreat again into the heart of Christ: you will find safety only in that divine asylum. How dearly you have already paid for the imprudence that made you leave it! Renounce forever the criminal joys of the outward and dissipated life if you would taste the true and holy pleasures of intimate communication with God. The vile food of birds of prey cannot be yours: do not approach those corpses where all is corruption and rottenness. The hunger, the agitations, the sufferings that you have experienced after your departure from the holy ark, push you and force you to enter. Return to Jesus, who will extend his hand to you and welcome you with kindness; to repair your strength, he will give you the bread of heaven to eat. Finally, there is nothing but snares, temptations and dangers for those who live in dissipation; and there is nothing but security, graces, holiness and happiness for the recollected soul that never leaves its interior, or that, like the dove, hastens to return to the holy ark".

Cf. Kempis, Solil. anim. c.io.

2.

Inner life

299. We know no better on this very important subject than Dom Chautard’s classic little work, The Soul of Every Apostolate. Written more than forty years ago, it has not yet lost its throbbing timeliness, nor will it ever lose it, for that would require that gold cease to be gold. It is one of those few books that bear the stamp of immortality. Although its fundamental thesis-as its title indicates-is to demonstrate that without interior life the apostolate cannot be fruitful, since it lacks its own soul, it constitutes a marvelous apology for the interior life in itself, even without taking into account its indispensable necessity for the fruitfulness of the apostolate. In approaching the study of the interior life and its indispensable necessity for souls consecrated to God in both contemplative and active orders-and perhaps even more so in the latter, because of the greater danger to which they are exposed without it-it has seemed to us that nothing would be more useful and practical for the reader than to offer him the fundamental ideas of Dom Chautard in a brief synthesis or schematic summary. For this purpose, we are going to compile the index of his precious little work, adding to each of its headings a brief explanatory gloss, composed, as far as possible, with the words of the distinguished abbot of the Trappist monastery of Notre-Dame de Sept-Fons. We hope that the reading of our brief index will arouse in the reader the desire to reread and meditate directly on those

precious pages, which should constitute for every religious one of his principal bedside books 5. 300.

Part One: God wants works and life

INTERIOR.

I.

Works and, therefore, apostolic zeal are willed by God.

“It is the design of divine Providence that man teaches man the way of salvation” (Leo XIII). But for external zeal to be more effective, we must not forget that the God of works must not be abandoned for the works of God and that Woe to me if I do not evangelize (1 Cor 9:16) does not authorize us to forget the “What does it profit man if I do not evangelize? (1 Cor 9:16) does not authorize us to forget the What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and his soul suffers loss? (Mt 16:26). 5

Cf. Dom J.B. Chautard, The soul of every apostolate

ed. (San Sebastián

1955).

C.U, Recollection and interior life 2.

449

God wants Jesus to be the life of the external works.

Because, by virtue of the incarnation and redemption, Jesus is the unique source of this divine life to whose participation all men are called: “I am the way, the truth and the life: no one comes to the Father except through me” (Io 14:6). “I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly”

(Io 10:10). “No one can lay any foundation other than that which is already laid, which is Christ Jesus” (1 Cor 3,11). “There is salvation in no one else, for no other name has been given to us under heaven among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). 3.

What is the inner life?

We can give the following definition of it: “It is the state of activity of a soul that reacts to put its natural inclinations in rule and strives to acquire the habit of judging and directing itself in everything by the lights of the Gospel and the examples of Our Lord”. This presupposes two movements. One by which it withdraws from all creatures that oppose the supernatural life, seeking never to lose its own presence: aversio a creaturis. And another by which the soul throws itself toward God in order to unite itself with Him: conversio ad Detim. With this conduct the soul wants to remain faithful to the grace that Our Lord offers it every moment. In other words, it lives united to Jesus and fulfills the Gospel’s motto: “He who is in me, and I in him, bears much fruit” (Lk. 15:5). 4.

How unknown is this inner life.

Modern man has a passion for the vertigo of activism and speed. The serene and contemplative life seems to him a waste of time and lamentable idleness. It is necessary to move, to organize, to become engrossed in a flood of activities and apostolic works…. The ship is running at full steam; and when those who steer it admire its speed, God sees that, because it lacks an expert helmsman, it is going without a fixed course and runs the risk of being shipwrecked. Our Lord desires and asks, first and foremost, worshippers “in spirit and in truth” (Acts 4:23). Americanism-the “heresy of action”-figures that it gives

great glory to God by focusing primarily on the problem of works-schools, hospitals, dispensaries…-to the detriment of penance and prayer, which are hardly understood. Religious life.

Answer to the modern objections against the interior life. 1. a The interior life is not inactive. The interior life is a great principle of apostolic zeal for anyone who does not strive to disfigure it. For, although the life of prayer does not manifest itself in external works, it is in itself and in its intimacy a source of incomparable activity. The immense works carried out, despite their precarious health, by an Augustine, a John Chrysostom, a Bernard, a Thomas Aquinas, a Vincent de Paul, etc., fill us with wonder. But we are even more amazed to see that all these men, in spite of their incessant labors, remained in the most constant union with God. It was precisely in their deep interior life, in their long hours of prayer, that they found the energy and strength for such astonishing activity. 2. a The interior life is not selfish. A fervent prayer, even a short one, will be more profitable for conversion than the longest discussions and the most beautiful discourses. He who prays deals with the first Bed and works directly upon it. Thus he disposes of all the second causes, which receive their efficacy from the first. The interior souls pray and sacrifice themselves for their brothers, the poor sinners. “The prayer of ten Carmelite nuns will be more useful to me than the sermons of twenty missionaries,” said the bishop of Cochinchina to the governor of Saigon. 3. a

The salvation of others should not make us lose sight of our own salvation.

Let’s hear Santo

Thomas Aquinas6: “To offer a sacrifice spiritually to God is to offer him something that pleases him. Of all the goods that man can offer to God, the most pleasing to God is undoubtedly the salvation of a soul. But the soul that man must offer first of all to God is his own, and secondly the souls of others. The more closely a man unites his soul to God or the souls of others, the more pleasing the sacrifice is to God. Therefore, it is more pleasing to God to apply one’s own soul and the souls of others to contemplation than to action. When it is said, then, that “no sacrifice is more pleasing to God than zeal for souls,” the merit of the active life is not put before that of the contemplative life; what is meant is that it is more meritorious to offer to God one’s own soul and the souls of others than any other external good.” * Cf. 2-2,182,2 ad 3.

CJL Recollection and interior life

301*

451

Part two: Union of active life and the

INNER LIFE.

i.

Priority of the interior life over the active life in the eyes of God*.

The most sublime divine operations are not those that look outward (operations ad extra, creation, etc.), but those that look inward to the divinity (operations ad intra, procession of the divine persons), Jesus Christ dedicated thirty years to

the contemplative life and only three to the active life, and even within the latter he often withdrew to solitude (Le 5:16) and spent the night in prayer (Le 6:12). Christ himself expressly and unequivocally declared that Mary, symbol of the contemplative life, “had chosen the better part” (Le 10:42). The apostles, in imitation of Jesus Christ, entrusted to the deacons the care of external things, so that they could devote themselves exclusively to prayer and the ministry of the word (cf. Acts 6:2-4). The Holy Fathers, doctors and theologians unanimously affirm the superiority of the interior life over the active life. The exterior works must be the overflow of the interior life. “The Creator has established an order in divine things, by virtue of which he who has the mission of distributing them must first partake of them and be filled with every abundance of the graces that God wishes to bestow on souls through them. Only then will he be authorized to communicate them. As St. Bernard says, the true apostle “must be a shell, not a channel. Water flows through the canal without leaving a drop in it; the shell, on the other hand, once it is full, lets what is left over flow through it to fertilize the fields. 3. The basis, the end and the means of every work must be imbued with the interior life. A great teacher of apostles wrote with conviction: “Music bands, theaters, projections, gymnastics, games, etc., I do not censure them. In my beginnings I also believed them to be indispensable; they are props that are used to support the work, for lack of others. But as the years have gone by, I have resorted to supernatural means, because every day that passes I see more clearly that any work built with elements

Gf. De caelesti hierarchia c.3.

purely human is called to disappear, and, instead, the works that bring men closer to God through the interior life, have the blessings of Providence” 4”.

The interior life and the active life call for each other.

Just as love of God is revealed by the acts of the interior life, love of neighbor is manifested by the operations of the exterior life, and since love of God cannot be separated from love of neighbor, it follows that neither can these two forms of life subsist separately. This is why St. Thomas says profoundly that “when someone is called from the contemplative life to the active life, this should not be done by way of subtraction, but by way of addition”.8 “The apostle,” wrote Father Matthew Crawley, “is a chalice filled to the brim with the life of Jesus Christ, who pours into souls the surplus of its contents”.

It is a very good thing to contemplate the truth; but to contemplate it and communicate it is much better, just as it is better to receive and reflect the light than just to receive it: “Just as it is better and more perfect to illuminate than just to shine, so it is better to contemplate and communicate to others the things contemplated than just to contemplate.”

The soul is nourished in contemplation and gives itself in the apostolate.

30a.

Third part:

The

active life, full of dangers

WITHOUT THE INTERIOR LIFE, ENSURES WITH IT THE PROGRESS OF VIRTUE.

1. External works, the means of sanctification for interior souls, are a danger to the salvation of those who are not.

That the external works of the apostolate can and must be a means of sanctification is clear. For holiness consists, first of all, in charity, and a work of the apostolate" that deserves that name is nothing other than an act of charity. Love is shown by works, says St. Gregory, and works demand sacrifice. God asks of his apostles this proof of abnegation: Feed my lambs and feed my sheep (Io 21). However, if the apostle gives himself unrestrainedly to external works of apostolate without the counterweight of a deep interior life, he risks going astray and even losing his 3 Cf. 2-2.182,1 ad 3. 9 2-2,188,6.

soul. Writing to Pope Eugene III, a great friend of his, St. Bernard says: "I fear that among the multitude of occupations that oppress you, as you do not expect that they will ever end, your soul will become familiar with them, and in this way you will gradually deprive yourself of this just and profitable pain that you now have for seeing yourself surrounded by them. It will be wiser to steal them from your body at their times and times than to allow them to drag you and take you where you do not want them to go. You ask where? To a hard heart. See here, then, where these little occupations can lead you-hae occupationes maledictae-if you continue to give yourself to them without leaving anything of you for you".

Is there any more august and holy undertaking than the government of the Church, or more useful for the glory of God and the good of souls? And yet St. Bernard-the great saint and doctor of the Church-describes it as an accursed occupation if it serves to stifle the interior life of those who consecrate themselves to it. 2.

The man of action without inner life.

This phrase portrays him in full body: if he has not yet reached the state of lukewarmness, he will fatally reach it. That state of lukewarmness-not of feeling or frailty, but of will-is a pact made with dissipation and negligence habitually consented to or not fought against, and a pact with deliberate venial sin; and, consequently, it is to deprive the soul of the assurance of its salvation and to dispose it to mortal sin. A real catastrophe is approaching, which can lead to the loss of faith and total apostasy. 3.

The interior life, the basis of the holiness of the apostolic worker.

And this is because the interior life produces these marvelous effects: It braces the soul against the dangers of the exterior ministry. It repairs the apostle's strength. It increases the energies and merits of the soul. It fills the apostle's soul with joy and consolation. It refines purity of intention in action. It is a shield against despondency.

St. Bernard, De consideratione l.r c.2. The text we quote can be found in 06m$ compíetas'de San Bernardo t.2 (BAC, Madrid 1955) p.583.

303. Part Four: Fecundity of works through the INNER LIFE, The inner life is for works the condition of their fecundity.

The following text of St. John of the Cross is classic: “Let those who are very active, who think to gird the world with their preaching and external works, be warned here that they would be much more useful to the Church and much more pleasing to God (leaving aside the good example they would give of themselves) if they spent even half of that time in being with God in prayer, even if they had not reached as high as this. Certainly, then they would do more and with less work with one work than with a thousand, their prayer deserving it and having gained spiritual strength in it; because otherwise everything is hammering and doing little more than nothing, and sometimes nothing, and sometimes even harm”.

Let us examine some causes of the fruitfulness of the interior life. a) The interior life attracts God’s blessings. This is why true apostolic workers rely more on their sacrifices and prayers than on their activity and eloquence. Father Lacordaire would say a long prayer before going up to the pulpit, and on his return to his cell he would take a discipline. Father Monsabré did not preach his conferences at Notre Dame de Paris without first praying on his knees the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary. To a friend who spoke to him about this he replied: “It is the last infusion I take before going to the pulpit”.

“The secrets of a fruitful apostolate are better found at the foot of the crucifix than in the display of the most brilliant qualities” (St. Bonaventure).

“Now these three things remain: word, example and prayer; but the greatest of the three is prayer” (St. Bernard). b) The interior life makes the apostle a sanctifier by means of good

example. What most encourages the faithful to practice a truly Christian life is precisely the virtue of the one whose mission it is to teach them. On the other hand, their weaknesses inevitably lead them away from the Lord (cf. Rom 2:24). The people have very clear intuitions. If a man of God preaches, they flock to hear him. But since the conduct of the pretended apostle does not conform to what is expected of him, he will not make any beneficial impression no matter how much he stirs himself up, and sometimes he will do real harm. That is why the Divine Master so urgently charges his disciples: 11 St. John of the Cross, Spiritual Canticle c.2911,3.

“So must your light shine before men, so that when they see your good works, they may glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Mt 5:16). c).

The interior life makes the apostle radiate life

If a person placed on an insulator is placed in communication with an electric machine, his body is charged with fluid, and if anyone approaches him or touches him, he receives a jolt from the electric spark that comes from the electrified body. A similar thing happens with the man of inner life. When he isolates himself from creatures and gets in contact with God, a constant communication is established between them in the form of a continuous current. The apostle becomes an accumulator of supernatural life and condenses in his soul a divine fluid that is distributed among others, adapting itself to all the circumstances and needs of the environment in which he works. What the Gospel says of our Lord Jesus Christ is

realized in him, albeit on a smaller scale: “There went out from him a power that healed everyone” (Le 6:19). His words and actions are the outpourings of that latent but sovereign power that overcomes obstacles, achieves the most difficult conversions or increases the fervor of pious souls.

d)

A preacher of great knowledge, but of mediocre piety, can expound the truths of faith in a brilliant way, but he will hardly make any impression on his audience in order to convert them or to radically improve their lives. When the apostle speaks of an intense interior life, he does so with an eloquence whose secret only he knows. He speaks from heaven to earth. It enlightens, enkindles, consoles and fortifies. When any of these conditions is lacking, eloquence is not complete. And only the preacher who lives of Jesus and who professes a tender devotion to his Immaculate Mother will be able to meet these conditions.

e)

The interior life produces evangelization in souls Because experience teaches, without a shadow of a doubt, that an apostolic work does not take deep root, is not stabilized or perpetuated until the evangelical worker has engendered in souls the interior life of which he himself was overflowing. Only the man of interior life possesses the life necessary to create other foci of fruitful life, giving more lasting results.

f)

The interior life, through the Eucharist, sums up the whole of the

The purpose of the incarnation and, consequently, of every apostolate is to divinize humanity: fruitfulness of the

apostolate.

456

P.III. Ascetical-mystical aspect of religious life.

“Jesus Christ became man so that man might become God” (St. Augustine). But the apostle assimilates the divine life in the Eucharist: better said, in the Eucharistic life, that is, in the solid interior life, which is nourished in the divine banquet. Christ himself said: “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you” (Acts 6:53). If the apostle must have an overabundance of divine life to distribute among the faithful and finds no other source than the Eucharist to draw from, how can we imagine that works can be effective without the action of the Eucharist in those who, directly or indirectly, must be the dispensers of that life by means of their works? 304.

Part Five: Some principles and warnings for

INNER LIFE.

This fifth part of Dom Chautard’s precious little work that we have been summarizing, consists of five chapters with the following titles: 1.

Advice to men of action for the interior life.

2. Prayer, an indispensable element of the interior life and, consequently, of the apostolate. 3. Liturgical life, the source of interior life and, therefore, of the apostolate. 4. The guardianship of the heart, the key to the interior life and, therefore, essential for the apostolate. 5. The apostle’s need for an ardent devotion to Mary Immaculate.

We recommend to the reader the direct reading of Dom Chautard's beautiful pages commenting on these principles. We gather here only the wise counsels that, in the form of principles, he inculcates in the first of the above-mentioned chapters. These are: i.° Not to throw oneself into exterior works carried exclusively by natural activity, but to consult God, to arrive at the conviction that we are driven by the inspiration of grace and the morally certain expression of his divine will. 2.0 It is imprudent and harmful to remain for a long time involved in excessive occupations that could leave the soul in a state incompatible with the essential exercises of the interior life. In this case, especially priests and religious should apply, even to the holiest works, the saying "tear it up and cast it far from you" (Mt 5:29). 3.0 In the face of the irrepressible overflow of the active life, a regulation should be imposed and observed, if necessary with violence, that determines the habitual use of time, made with the advice of a prudent, interior and experienced director.

4.The greater the occupation, the greater the need for this life. Therefore, we must foster the thirst for this life and provide the necessary means so that this thirst does not become one of those sterile desires that the devil uses so skillfully to lull souls to sleep and leave them in illusion, 5.0 When the soul finds itself accidentally, by God's will, very busy and in the moral impossibility of prolonging its exercises of piety, it possesses an infallible thermometer which will indicate to it whether it is really keeping itself in fervor. If she has a true thirst for interior life and takes advantage of every occasion that presents itself to fulfill the essential practices, she can rest assured and count on the special graces that God has in store for her: they will give

her sufficient strength to advance in the spiritual life. 6. As long as the man of action has not succeeded in preserving himself in the recollection and dependence on grace that must accompany him everywhere, he finds himself in an insufficient state of interior life. It is enough a look rather of the heart than of the mind: a sure, just and penetrating look to know if in the midst of our activity we are still under the influence of Jesus,

Chapter

We are fully convinced that this chapter will be unpleasant and annoying for a certain class of readers. Modern frivolity does not want to hear about sacrifices or abnegation. Even within the field of Christian spirituality and among persons consecrated to God themselves, there is a much less uncomfortable air blowing today. Rather than the harsh austerities of the saints of all ages, people today prefer to speak of other easier subjects, perhaps excellent in themselves, but which can in no way be invoked to disavow, silence or give less importance to the perfect self-abnegation advocated by Christ himself with meridian clarity. The divine Master, in fact, clearly warned in the Gospel, without beating about the bush, that in order to follow him, perfect self-denial is indispensable: “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. It should be noted that Christ did not address this program of self-denial to his apostles-as one might think if one looks only at the text of St. Matthew (16:24)-but to the multitude, as St. Mark says (8:34), that is, to absolutely all men, as he definitely states

Luke (9:23). Here is, in three columns, the comparative text of the three synoptic Gospels: Matthew 16:24

Mark 8.34

Luke 9,23

Then said Jesus to his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

And when he had called the multitude together with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

And he said to all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

As can be seen, no one is exempt from the pressing call of Jesus Christ to perfect self-denial. But it is evident that it affects in a very special way those who have given themselves to him completely and totally in the religious life. The latter must aspire to be fully configured to the death of Christ (cf. Phil 3:10), to the point of being able to say with St. Paul himself: “I have been crucified with Christ” (Gal 2:19). For this reason, a chapter on this very important subject seems indispensable in a work such as ours, dedicated exclusively to the study of the great themes of religious life. We will therefore comment on the Gospel passage concerning perfect self-denial, at the maximum length that the framework of our work allows. i*.

“If any man will come after me,.”

306. A too hasty and superficial interpretation could see in these first words of Christ a simple invitation to follow him along the path of self-denial, but without involving a true command or demand. But the context of the Gospel, certain parallel places, the unanimous interpretation of the Holy Fathers, the Magisterium of the Church and the Catholic exegetes oblige us to give these words the sense of a true precept or command. Let us listen to the commentary of

modern exegesis: “It is by no means a simple invitation. It is so in its structure. It bears the imprint of an invitation to the kingdom-whose non-entry is, on the other hand, culpable (Mt 13:15)-but it is seen that, having already entered the kingdom, it is a necessary doctrine in it. For if all three retain here the literary formulation of the “invitation”: “If any man will come after me…”, the context will make it clear what this denial means in Christ’s thought. Luke himself, in another passage, parallel or “duplicate” of this one, gives the deep meaning of this: “Whoever does not take up his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple” (Le 14:27) K 1 Cf. BiWia annotated by the professors of Salamanca t.$, Gospels (BAC, Madrid 1964) p.386.

“These words have a universal character, as the beginning indicates: he said to all. Mark 8:34 mentions the crowd, with the disciples. It is a question of norms of life and salvation that concern everyone. To follow Jesus has a vital and complex meaning. It is to become his disciple. And it demands two conditions: a) to renounce oneself; b) to take up one’s cross, the cross of each one of us. Luke adds: every day, a phrase that gives death a spiritual meaning, like the one mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15:31. To take up one’s cross has, therefore, a spiritual and figurative sense. And follow me: this final phrase, which is in all three evangelists, is not a new condition, but the positive side of discipleship: to live as Christ has lived” 2.

It is therefore beyond any doubt that Christ’s call to perfect self-denial is addressed to all those who wish to follow him; and not as a simple invitation, but as a true and rigorous precept, since, as St. Luke expressly warns, whoever does

not take up his own cross and follow Christ cannot be his disciple (cf. Le 14:27). It is true, however, that this precept of Christ does not bind all Christians to the same degree of intensity. It is necessary to adapt it to the demands and possibilities of one's own state and condition of life: it does not bind the laity in the same way as it does the religious. But all are bound-without exception-to that abnegation of self which is indispensable for the perfect fulfillment of the duties of their own state and condition of life. 2*

".♦♦ deny yourself***."

In the case of religious, to whom we are now addressing ourselves exclusively, it seems to us that in the perfect abnegation of self three moments or stages of ascent can be distinguished: simple Christian mortification, the spirit of sacrifice, and total death to self. Let us examine each of these three stages separately. a)

Christian mortification

307. A few years ago, Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange 3: "Practical naturalism, which is the negation of the spirit of faith in the conduct of life, continually tends to be reborn in more or less accentuated forms, as could be seen in Americanism and Modemism a few years ago. We were told: "Why

Cf. La Sagrada Escritura: Nuevo Testamento t.i, Evangelios (BAC, Madrid 1961) p.661-662. 3 Cf. Las tres edades de la vida interior (Buenos Aires 1944) t.i p.319-20.

To speak so much of mortification, Christianity being a doctrine of life; of renunciation, if Christianity must

assimilate all human activity instead of destroying it; of obedience, if Christianity is a doctrine of freedom? These passive virtues," they continued, "are of no greater importance than for negative spirits, incapable of undertaking anything and with no other strength than that of inertia".

Unfortunately, since Fr. Garrigou wrote those words, things have not improved at all, but, on the contrary, have gotten terribly worse. Naturalism - that is, the denial of the spirit of faith, as the same author says in his own words - is invading everything. And people have gone to the extreme of begging a director of spiritual exercises for nuns: "Father, speak to us about anything you want except mortification; it is a very unpleasant subject". A return to serenity and good sense is necessary if we do not want to perish. The true aggiornamento or modernization of the Church can only consist in living ever more intensely the spirit of the Gospel, which is eternal and immutable like Christ himself (Paul VI). It is necessary, therefore, to speak of Christian mortification, even if it is unpleasant and unpleasant to our own comfort and gift. Addressing himself precisely to religious, Father Chaignon4 writes with great weight and balance: "Let us form an exact idea of external mortification, enclosed within its just limits. We will thus understand what it obliges and what we should think of a Christian and, with greater reason, of a religious who dispenses himself from practicing it or even condemns it. External mortification enclosed within its just limits consists in resisting nature and fighting it without destroying it; in respecting its rights, without flattering its evil inclinations. Nature is an enemy at once necessary and dangerous; we are equally forbidden to make peace with her or to put her to death. Discretion is here a duty, more atfn than in any other virtue. For, when we are told that perfect mortification must put one's own nature to death, it means that it must perfectly dominate it and establish it, in relation

to grace, in a total dependence, similar to that of a dead body in relation to those who can dispose of it at their will. Moreover, far from the mortified man having to lack sentiment, it is from the very sentiment itself subjugated by mortification that all his merit proceeds before God; and that is why this great virtue is called mortification and not death. Wisdom must, therefore, be made manifest here by reforming by mortification what is corrupt in nature, which is, after all, the work of God. We can, therefore, and even ought to listen to nature in what it demands and seeks for its own preservation, provided we provide it with what it asks of us, not for its own satisfaction, but to fulfill thereby the will of the Lord. By always remaining at war with ourselves, we will attain equal merit before God in fighting than in preserving ourselves.

Cf. Ivféditations religieuses (Paris 1908) t.3 p.i 14*117.

God will give us the same reward when we mortify ourselves for Him as when, out of obedience to Him, we cease to mortify ourselves. God will grant us the same reward when we mortify ourselves for Him as when, by obeying Him, we cease to mortify ourselves. Everything is virtue when one does what God wants and does it precisely for God. Enclosed within the just limits we have just specified, this virtue is obviously obligatory for every Christian; but it is even more obligatory for those who have embraced the religious life. We have entered into the family of Jesus Christ by baptism, thereby committing ourselves to follow the spirit of the Gospel. Does not its whole doctrine tend to establish the dominion of the spirit over the body? This great principle appears unceasingly in the epistles of St. Paul: “Those who

belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts" (Gal 5:34). "IF ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye shall mortify the deeds of the flesh with the spirit, ye shall live" (Rom 8:13). "Mortify your earthly members..." (Col 3:5). We have promised, moreover, to imitate the Savior, our indispensable model. But is He not a God who consecrates in His person the holy exercises of external mortification? Eight days after his birth we see him offering to his heavenly Father the first fruits of his blood. In his passion we see him offer his adorable face to the slaps and spittle, his head to the crown of thorns, his body to all martyrdoms. His whole life was but one long and painful immolation. Animated by the same spirit as their divine Chief, the saints were always ingenious in procuring for themselves all kinds of sufferings; self-hatred was one of their first instincts, and it may be said to be an instinct common to all. Those who had led the purest life were the most ardent in mortifying themselves. Recall the austerities of the forerunner of Jesus Christ, of St. Catherine of Siena, of St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzis, of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, and of a thousand other prodigies of innocence. Dare we condemn what the Church has honored with her praise, what a God-Man has so highly authorized by his own example? Does not external mortification satisfy the debts contracted by sin: have we not all need to expiate them, and in great numbers? Mortification subdues the flesh to the spirit and represses its rebellions: have we, perchance, a more importunate and dangerous enemy? Mortification attracts to us the graces that preserve us from future sins: do we not all have a great need of them? Mortification disposes us to receive the divine light, that living faith, that taste of God and of the things of God of which we feel so lacking: what goods should we desire more ardently? Add to these motives which affect all Christians those others which make mortification more obligatory for religious: they must follow Jesus Christ more

closely, imitate him more perfectly. In order to respond to the designs of the Church they must, as public penitents, placate God for so many hardened sinners who never cease to provoke his wrath; they must contribute to the great work of redemption ‘by fulfilling in their flesh what is lacking in the passion of Christ’ (Col 1:24)”.

308* In specifying what the mortification of the religious should consist of concretely, Dom Columba Marmion points out three aspects or zones that mark out the hierarchy of values in a descending scale 5: 5 Cf. Jesus Christ, ideal of the monk c.Q 0.2-4*.

a) In the first place, the mortifications imposed by the Church: fasts, abstinences, *etc.* All things being equal, these are the most sanctifying, since they are offered to God through the Church, the spouse of Christ, and therefore have a higher expiatory value than any other afflictive practices. b) In the second place, the mortifications imposed by the rule and constitutions and those inherent to the daily practice of the monastic life: common life, religious vows, monastic observances, *etc.* c) In the third place, the mortifications voluntarily chosen by the religious himself. The infallible procedure in order not to err in this matter consists in always having the approval of the superior, or that of a discreet and competent spiritual director. In case of conflict between what is permitted by the superior or by the spiritual director, the criterion of the superior must prevail, because obedience to the superior is obligatory by virtue of the vow of obedience, while obedience to the director is entirely free and voluntary (and this even if one has made a vow of obedience to the director, which is very imprudent

most of the time, because the obligation of a particular vow cannot prevail over the obligation coming from the public vow of obedience to the superior, which is part of the very essence of the religious state). The superior or director will try, however, not to imprudently restrain his subjects from aspirations of a greater immolation of themselves-perhaps requested and urged by the Holy Spirit himself-, since by doing so they would incur a grave responsibility before God. The number of these voluntary mortifications is to be measured, in general, by the sins to be expiated, the obstacles to be removed and the more or less intense desire to immolate oneself fully with Christ for the sake of the Mystical Body, which is the Church. Distinguishing appropriately between extraordinary penances and the mortifications that ordinary religious life inevitably entails, Dom Columba Marmion 6 writes: “It would be dangerous temerity to engage in extraordinary mortifications without being called by God, since to be able to endure constant macerations that destroy the flesh is a gift of his. When he grants it to a soul, it is a sign that he wants to make it progress rapidly in the spiritual life and prepare it to receive ineffable communications of his divine grace, emptying it totally of itself in order to possess it entirely and without any division; but to enter into this eamtno it is necessary to be called by God, since it would be very dangerous to enter into it on one’s own initiative.... 6 L.c. n.4.

On the contrary, in interior mortification, in which true perfection consists, we have no limit, because it is responsible for repressing the vices of the spirit, for crushing self-love, personal judgment and self-will; that which restrains proud, vain, fussy tendencies; that which opposes

lightness, curiosity, dissipation. It consists mainly in subjecting oneself to the common life, which is mortification par excellence. Let us take a look at the daily schedule: to rise at the first ring of the bell, to go to the choir, even if we find ourselves indisposed, and to praise God there with attention and fervor; to submit to the thousand little recommendations of the rule concerning work, the refectory, recreation and sleep. To submit oneself to all this constantly, without murmuring or singling oneself out; this is an excellent mortification, by which the soul becomes very pleasing to God and becomes very apt to receive the action of the Holy Spirit. Let us take silence as an example: how many times during the day will we have the occasion to speak for no reason! In these cases we should say to ourselves: "No, for the love of Christ and to preserve intact in my soul the perfume of his divine presence, I will not speak. The day can thus be interwoven with acts of mortification, which are acts of love. Even immediate obedience to the exercises to which God calls us, is a source of virtue: Mox ex occupatis manibns, "at once unoccupied hands," says St. Benedict in his Rule (c. 5). This recommendation seems of little importance; but to practice it with constancy requires great virtue. While I am working, the bell rings and I am often tempted to say: "Only ten seconds and I have finished. But if I listen to this suggestion I prefer my own will to God's, I do not renounce myself, I do not do what the Saint commands in his rule: Quod agebant imperfectum relinquentes, "leaving stn finish what they were doing". In themselves they are small things, of little substance; but they are very great because of the virtues they force us to practice, because of the love that inspires them, because of the holiness they make us attain. The Eternal Father said to St. Catherine of Siena: "Neither he who calls me only in word, saying: "Lord, Lord, I would like to do something for you"; nor he who desires and wants to mortify the body with many penances, without killing his

own will, are pleasing to me, “7 because we cannot please God if we do not fulfill his divine good pleasure in everything. Let us also willingly accept the mortifications that divine Providence sends us: hunger, cold, heat; uncomfortable dispositions of place, time, people; everything that bothers us. You will still say, “These things are nothing, but these little things are inscribed in the divine plans that affect us personally: that is why we must accept them with love. Even sickness, when the Lord sends it to us, or the unhealthy state, the usual sickness, which is even more painful. Let us accept adversity, spiritual aridity, which are very painful mortifications for nature. If we accept all this with loving submission, without becoming discouraged in the service of God, even if heaven remains dark and does not answer our prayers, the soul will open itself more and more to the action of God, because, as St. Paul says, “everything works together for the good of those predestined for holiness” (Rom. S, 2S).

Dom Marmion ends his magnificent chapter by showing in what way all the mortifications that we can practice, even to the complete abnegation of ourselves, 7 Cf. St. Catherine of Siena, The Dialogue c.n. The complete context can be found in the edition of the BAC (Madrid igss) p.200. (Author’s note.)

receive all their value and merit from their union with the sufferings of Christ. Detached from Him, they are nothing and have no value whatsoever. b)

The spirit of sacrifice

Christian mortification, practiced with regularity and perseverance in the way we have just explained, engenders in the soul the spirit of sacrifice, by virtue of which the abnegation of self becomes more and more spontaneous and connatural. The spirit of sacrifice represents, then, a progress and advance with respect to simple mortification: it is, quite simply, the best fruit and result of mortification. We are going to expose the following fundamental points regarding the spirit of sacrifice: necessity, extension, fruits it produces and the example of Jesus Christ and the saints 8. i)

Need for the spirit of sacrifice

309 Religious life, in its development and perfection, is nothing other than the immolation of nature by grace. And the readiness, the generosity with which we make to God that great number of particular sacrifices of our lights, inclinations and repugnances, which constitute the total immolation of ourselves, is what we call the spirit of sacrifice. All Christians should practice it, since all of them, according to the apostle St. Peter, possess a true priesthood and must exercise it by offering living hosts to God: "You, as living stones, are built into a spiritual house and a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet 2:5). But it is easy to understand that, for very special reasons, religious souls have to offer these sacrifices to God in a more perfect and abundant way than the simple faithful. a) Without a spirit of sacrifice, instead of profiting from it, they are more likely to be able to offer spiritual sacrifices to God.

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the gratitude received

is committed

a

dreadful/

The faithful soul says to God in Kempis' admirable work Imitation of Christ:

abuse.

"I have need of your grace, Lord, and of a very great grace to overcome my nature, always inclined to evil" 9.

This grace, which God denies to no one, is granted to the religious with true profusion. Cf. Chaignon, O.E. vol. 3, p. 22-36.

9 Kempis, Imitation of Christ 1.3 c.55.

of? Mainly to resist nature; and ordinarily we do not make of this divine help the use for which it has been given to us, unless we raise ourselves above ourselves and triumph fully over our disordered inclinations. Between God and a soul that He wants to sanctify-especially when He wants to raise it to the summit of perfection-there is a continuous exchange of graces offered and sacrifices requested. How often an interior voice says to the religious: "Leave these frivolous thoughts, to occupy yourself with more serious things; forget yourself to please Me, imposing on yourself the privation of this word, of this look,...; show that you love Me by accepting this contradiction, by observing this rule"! Grace speaks-or, more precisely, God speaks-but nature speaks too. To follow that light it is necessary to deny oneself; there is nothing more comfortable, on the contrary,

than to let oneself be carried away by evil inclinations. What results from this: “Withdraw, Lord; offer that rich talent to others; it would cost me too much to acquire it for myself”. This is the way in which a consecrated soul appreciates the immense benefits of God. From this comes the little or no fruit that is drawn from so many readings, from so many exhortations, from so many good inspirations that religious constantly receive, especially in times of retreat, of renewal of vows, of great liturgical solemnities. It would have been necessary to reflect seriously, to enter into ourselves, to pray and to cross with a firm and determined step the distance that separates speculation from practice. We consented to see the truth and to recognize it theoretically; but we lacked the courage to put it energetically into practice. How many graces lost in the life of an immortified religious and what a grave responsibility he has carried on his shoulders! b)

No

spirit of sacrifice is not posi^-gotregrettable

Two things,” says Kempis, “are particularly effective in making amends for our defects: to turn away energetically from everything to which vicious nature inclines, and to seek fervently that good of which we have the greatest need. And he adds in the same chapter: “What chills in many the desire to advance and to correct themselves is the horror of the difficulty and the work of combat”; and in another passage: “If you do not do violence to yourself, you will never be able to overcome a single vice”. The struggle, which is always painful, is always painful because of one’s own defects.

10 Ibid. l.i c “25’.

We act sincerely when, moved by God on certain fervent days, we draw up a plan for a new life and make a determination to reform those things that our good conscience reproaches us for. We act with sincerity when, moved by God in certain days of fervor, we draw up the plan of a new life and we make the determination to reform in ourselves those things that our good conscience reproaches us for. What is it, then, that paralyzes our good desires and thwarts our holy projects? The horror of difficulty and of the work of combat. Our defects displease us, since they constitute an obstacle to God's designs for us and compromise our very salvation; but to correct them, we would have to watch over our imagination, pay attention to our spirit, resist our evil inclinations, and renounce ourselves. All this seems very difficult to us; we are afraid, we have a real horror of difficulty. However, our life goes by and our defects remain, threatening to descend with us to the grave and accompany us to the terrible tribunal of God. Why? Because instead of repressing them with force we have had up to the present a thousand criminal condescensions towards them. What would be today the peace of my soul, the solidity and sweetness of my hope, the ease and happiness of my communications with God, if every year I had had the courage and the valor to correct myself of only one of my defects! c) Without a spirit of sacrifice we will never arrive at SOLID VIRTUE, AT HOLINESS AND NOT EVEN AT SALVATION. Far from virtue being born with us, we come into the world, on the contrary, full of the opposite evil inclinations. Our first work consists in resisting and overcoming them. We have, perhaps, a haughty, independent character, inclined to dominate others, and we must be obedient. Perhaps we have a lively, fiery, impetuous temperament, and we must live in peace with people whose defects, contrary to our own, constitute for us a perpetual

and constant trial. This is the perpetual struggle that we must engage in against ourselves. It is not without reason that the same word is used in Latin to designate “virtue” and “fortitude”: virtus. Virtue, virtus, is the strength of the soul applied to the good. Virtue begins where sacrifice begins. Merit is linked to effort. Let us be wary of any virtue that is too easy. Suffer and abstain: sustine, obstine; pagan wisdom knew nothing more perfect. Under the evangelical law, perfection is love: Plenitudo legis est dilectio (Rom 13:10). But let us not confuse

It is a love that gives itself, that immolates itself, that is tested by sacrifices, that is measured by its extent and difficulty: “If you love me, keep my commandments” (Mt 14:15). If anyone would come to me,” says the Savior, “let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (cf. Mt 16:24), then self-denial, self-immolation, is the touchstone of true virtue. A pretended holiness without a spirit of sacrifice is an edifice without a foundation. It is easy to be humble as long as we are not humbled, and very patient as long as we have nothing to suffer; but that is not what constitutes Christian and religious holiness, of which the same must be said as of the kingdom of heaven, which is its reward: it cannot be attained except by doing violence to oneself. It is not necessary, then, to ask why the grace of God has remained so sterile in us; why we are so naked of solid virtues, so full of imperfections: because we have not known how to appreciate the spirit of sacrifice for what it is worth. 2)

Extension of the spirit of sacrifice

310. Having considered the necessity of the spirit of sacrifice, let us now see how far it must go or be extended, “Lord,” asks Kempis, “how often must I resign myself and in what things must I renounce myself? When and in what must I practice the spirit of sacrifice?” Jesus Christ answers: “Always and at all times, in little things and in great things, without exception. The immolation of nature by grace must be continuous and universal. a) Continuous immolation. When we are told that we must always and at all times remain in the disposition to sacrifice to the good pleasure of God our thoughts and affections, our repugnances and inclinations, we are doing nothing other than proclaiming one of the most immediate consequences of the great principle of the end of man and of the dominion of God over all creatures. Belonging to God always and at all times, it is logical that we should exist for Him and for His divine service, always and at all times. But we cannot truly serve him except by the sacrifice of our will to his will. This is the fundamental obligation of every Christian, and all the more so of the religious. 11 Kempis, Imitation of Christ I.3 c.37<

Our nature is always corrupted, always inclined to evil by the threefold concupiscence. It is therefore indispensable to watch over it, to repress it, to sacrifice it continually, always and at all times. We can only go to God by going up the torrent of our vicious inclinations; if we cease to resist the current, it drags us down with impetus. Indeed, when we reflect on ourselves, we catch ourselves at every moment in some access of pride, in the pursuit of what flatters our senses, under the rule of a thousand desires and attachments to things here below. Without continual vigilance, without effort and sacrifice, we may be governed

by grace from time to time, but habitually we will be governed by nature. We will often lead a life of instinct, sometimes a life of reason, but almost never that life of faith which is the only truly Christian life; we will give to God a few moments, but almost all our days will be carried away by our evil inclinations. Is this not what we have so often deplored? How many moments of light tribulation we could exchange for the immense weight of eternal happiness! h) Universal immolation. The great and the small, the interior and the exterior: everything must be submitted to the law of divine love for an entire conformity with the will of the Lord. “In all things I demand of you an unreserved detachment. Otherwise, how could you be wholly mine and I wholly yours if inwardly and outwardly you were not free from all self-will? “12 It is not a part of man, but the whole man, his thoughts, actions and sufferings, that the spirit of sacrifice is to withdraw from the domain of nature in order to transfer it to the domain of grace. - First of all, our thoughts. To watch over our own spirit is to go to the very root of evil in order to prevent it, and to that of good in order to favor its development. Disorder passes easily from the spirit to the heart. But we must not only reject the perverse thoughts that threaten the purity of our soul, but also the vain and strange thoughts, which uselessly consume a great part of our life. Our actions are the fruit of our thoughts. The spirit of sacrifice must extend to all of them: to the bad ones, to reject them, and to the good ones, to strive to per12 Kempis, 1.3 c-37.

We must not neglect the most ordinary ones, the most indifferent in themselves; nor those that refer to the care of the body, social conveniences, etc., nor those that refer to

the care of the body. We must not neglect the most ordinary, the most indifferent in themselves; nor those that refer to the care of the body, social conveniences, *etc.* Stripping them of their earthly and purely human character, the spirit of sacrifice elevates them by faith to the rank of supernatural^ meritorious works. Finally, ^suffering’} is no less proper to fallen man than thought and action, and requires even greater spirit of sacrifice. It is he who makes us esteem, endure, and love it; and, by these three successive degrees, he obtains his most beautiful triumph over a nature ever inimical to all that discomforts it. To esteem sufferings it is enough to consider the choice made of them by a God-Man as a means of destroying sin and saving the world; it is enough to remember that they come from God and lead to God. We need do nothing else in this but reject the prejudices of our spirit. To bear them we must sacrifice the rebelliousness of our heart. We can, no doubt, ask at times-with our divine model-that the chalice of bitterness be removed from us; but we must always, like Him, abandon ourselves to the will of our heavenly Father. Perfection, however, lies in loving sufferings in themselves and with all their entourage: poverty, humiliation, contempt, total detachment from creatures. Who will be able to consummate such a complete sacrifice? Only charity, with all its ardors, will be able to do it. It is she who cries out through the mouth of St. Paul: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, the sword?” (Rom 8:35). “I take pleasure in the sicknesses, in the reproaches, in the necessities, in the persecutions, in the distresses, which I suffer for Christ’s sake” (2 Cor 12:xo). Never would the Apostle Paul have found in his heart such sublime sentiments if divine grace had not brought them to him. “It is by the grace of God that I am what I am” (1 Cor 15:10). When we approach the sacred table, let us ask the Lord to give us, together with his own body, all the graces we need: the strength, the

magnanimity, the generous love to renounce ourselves always and in everything, and to live henceforth in a state of perpetual immolation, in union with the Lamb ever living and ever sacrificed for the glory of God and our own salvation. 3)

Splendid fruits of the spirit of sacrifice

31 i. After grace and prayer, which constitute the first source of every spiritual gift, nothing contributes so much to make us love and desire the spirit of sacrifice as the consideration of the splendid fruits it produces in us. Without exhausting the matter, we can point out the following: it purifies the soul; it detaches it from every impure alloy, from vanities and carnal or all too human affections; it establishes

It substitutes in us the will and life of God for our own life and will; by submitting us to the action of the Holy Spirit, it transforms us into true children of God, according to the expression of St. Paul: “Those who are moved by the Spirit of God are children of God” (Rom. 8:14). The spirit of sacrifice makes us store up treasures of merit, since to each of man’s supernatural acts corresponds an increase of grace in time and of glory in eternity. To the spirit of sacrifice-as well as to the spirit of faith, which constitutes its principle-must be attributed the heroic virtues, the prodigies of dedication that we admire in the great servants of God, “O Lord!-and the beauty of the first centuries will reappear, faith will be revived in the hearts of your children, the deserts and solitudes will be populated with saints and your sanctuary will be filled with faithful ministers”.

But among the excellent fruits of this generous, self-denial there is upcx that is too little meditated: it is the deep peace and the inestimable happiness that it gives us even in the midst of the great hardships of this sad life. That the spirit of sacrifice leads to this heaven is something quite clear and well known. The immolation of oneself constitutes the most perfect (charity: “Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (Io 15:13). And is it not to die for God to renounce, for his love, all the inclinations of nature? But do we really and truly believe that a fervent soul finds in this continuous immolation an anticipated heaven, that our present happiness is increased by reason of our courage and bravery in sacrificing ourselves for God? And yet this is a truth which is evident from the whole teaching of the Gospel, and which the experience of the saints has at all times confirmed: how, indeed, can we fail to understand that perfect self-denial, by repressing our disordered inclinations, removes and destroys the ordinary cause of our troubles, troubles, and bitterness? The apostle James expressly says: “Whence among you so many wars and contentions? Is it not from the passions, which fight in your members?” (Iac 4:1). On the other hand, by submitting ourselves to the rule of grace and placing ourselves in the way of God, which constitutes the order par excellence, self-abnegation fixes our soul in an unalterable peace, as the prophet Baruch says: “If you had walked in the way of God, you would dwell

Is it not evident that this generosity establishes us in the state and condition in which the Lord wants to see us in order to fill us with blessings and intoxicate us with his sweetness? The martyrs are the proof of this. Their

dedication rose to the highest summit of heroism; but their joy also burst forth at the sight of the instruments of their tortures; they kissed the hands of their executioners; and while they were being quartered or burned, they were heard to cry out: “No feast ever had so many delights for us”. It is that God intoxicated them with the ineffable wine of his consolations. 4)

The example of Jesus Christ and the saints

312 The Savior never took into account his own tastes and attractions, but only the good pleasure of his heavenly Father. Christ himself said it: “I always do what is pleasing to him” (Rom. 8:29), and the apostle Paul repeated it: “Christ did not seek his own pleasure” (Rom. 15:3). The Savior lived his spirit of sacrifice and obedience to the point of death, even death on a cross (cf. Phil 2:8), and St. Paul invites us to seek in the sublime heroism of Jesus Christ the energy we need to master ourselves. Here is an impressive passage from chapter 12 of his epistle to the Hebrews: “Let us cast off the weight of sin that besets us, and through patience let us run to the battle that is set before us, looking unto the author and finisher of our faith, Jesus, who instead of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, not counting it all but ignominy, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. Therefore bring to your consideration him who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, so that you may not lose heart through fatigue. You have not yet resisted to the point of blood in your struggle against sin” (Hebr 12:1-4).

In St. Paul’s thought, the Christian life is a hard and laborious struggle. It is necessary to “run towards him through patience”; and, in order to achieve this unalterable patience, we must “set our eyes on Jesus Christ, the author and perfecter of our faith. He could have provided for

himself a sweet and pleasant life, but he chose to “endure the cross” with all its opprobrities and pains. He made this choice out of love for us, to preserve us by his example from the poison that comes with a life of comfort and honor. Let us think seriously, then, of what the Son of God suffered in giving Himself up for us to “the contradiction of sinners,” armed against Him with all the hatred of hell. If we consider His sufferings as the measure of His love for us, and if we compare them with our own, we will see how much He suffered for us,

our steadfastness will never succumb under the weight of trials, “we are weary with fatigue. For, after all, we have not yet resisted “unto blood” in combating sin, and Jesus poured out all his blood to destroy it in us. This was precisely what made the saints so faithful in the practice of the science of sacrifice. The immolation of themselves was a necessity for them, in order to become perfect imitators of Jesus Christ. That is why they were not content to accept gratefully the cross that Providence gave them, but they asked for stronger and heavier crosses, without ever finding them too hard. St. Francis Xavier complained to the Lord of the excess of his joy, of the insufficiency of his labors and trials: “Still more, Lord,” still more labors, contradictions, privations, abandonment of creatures. St. Teresa was consumed with tears, seeing herself far from Jesus Christ in this poor world; and, to console herself for her bitterness, she asked the Lord that, if He did not grant her the joy of dying, He would at least grant her the joy of suffering much for Him: “Either die or suffer “13. When the Lord asked St. John of the Cross what he wanted as a reward for the labors he had suffered for Him, the sublime mystic of Fontiver replied: “To die, Lord,

and to be despised by You". And St. Therese of the Child Jesus became so impassioned by pain that she was forced to confess: "I have become unable to suffer, because every suffering is sweet to me". The examples of love of suffering drawn from the lives of the saints could be multiplied with great abundance. All of them-the saints-were men of flesh and blood like us. What they were able to do, leaning on the One who comforted them (cf. Phil 4:13), we too could do. Let us pray, let us reflect; but, above all, let us exercise ourselves in overcoming and surpassing ourselves. Let us remember once again the words of St. Paul: "Since we are enveloped by such a cloud of witnesses, let us cast off the weight of sin that besets us, and through patience let us run to the battle that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith" (Hebr 12:1-2). c)

Total death to self

313. The spirit of sacrifice and love of suffering - of which we have spoken in the preceding pages - reaches its maximum exponent in the total death to the self. It is very difficult to go back to these heights, and it can be said that not even the 13 Santa Teresa, Vida c.40 n.20.

The great saints themselves achieved it fully and completely; but all of them attempted the climb to get as close as possible to that divine summit where, completely dead to themselves, there reigns in their lives only "the honor and glory of God" (St. John of the Cross). It is not a morbid eagerness to die to oneself out of weariness or weariness of living in this valley of tears and misery. It is precisely a matter of dying in order to live; of dying totally

to sin in order to live in all its fullness the life of grace; of dying to oneself and to the world in order to live entirely for God. The Christian life, as is well known, reaches its fullness in the participation in the paschal mystery of Christ. Christianity is not a religion of death, but of life and resurrection, but to rise with Christ we must first die with him. In his epistle to the Romans, St. Paul marvelously expounded the fundamental lines of the great mystery of our death and resurrection in Christ: “We who have died to sin, how can we still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized to share in his death? We have been buried with him by baptism into his death, so that, as he was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live a new life. For if we have been grafted into him by the likeness of his death, we shall also be grafted into him by the likeness of his resurrection. For we know that our old man was crucified so that the body of sin might be destroyed and we would no longer serve sin. Indeed, he who dies is absolved of his sin. If we have died with Christ, we shall also live with him” (Rom 6:2-8).

In his epistle to the Colossians, St. Paul recalls once again the paschal mystery of Christ, in order to forcefully reclaim the need to die with him to the things of the earth and to live entirely for God. “If you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God; consider the things that are above, not the things that are on earth. You are already dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Col 3:1-3).

Grou 14: “The life of Jesus Christ was a continuous death; a mystical death, the last act and consummation of which was his natural death on the cross. 14 P.

Grou, S. I., Manuel des ámes intérieures (Paris 1901) p. 16*21.

For this very reason, the new life that we must all lead in Jesus Christ is nothing other than a continual death to ourselves: death to sins, even to the lightest and least imperfections; death to the world and to all external things; death to the senses and to the immoderate care of our body; death to character and natural defects; death to self-will; death to the esteem and love of ourselves; death to spiritual consolations; death to supports and securities in relation to the state of our soul; in short, death to all propriety in things pertaining to holiness By these various degrees of death the mystical life of Jesus Christ is established in us; and when death unloads upon us its last blow, Jesus Christ resurrects us and communicates to us the qualities of his glorious life, even here on earth, at least as regards the soul and what it can receive from it in this world. Let us examine a little the different degrees of this death which we have just enumerated. -Death to sins, even to the lightest, and to the least imperfections. The first resolution to be taken by a soul that wants to be all of God is that of never committing any fault with deliberate warning and purpose; of never acting against his conscience; of never refusing God anything he asks of him; of never saying: “This is a small thing, God will forgive me this trifle”. This resolution is essential and must be kept with inviolable fidelity. It is obvious that many faults of first movements, of inadvertence, of fragility will escape the soul; but these faults do not represent an obstacle on the road to perfection, nor do they paralyze the march towards it, since they were neither foreseen nor wanted. Death to the world and to all external things. That is, neither

love the world nor seek it; grant it only what we cannot refuse it, according to our state, and what God himself wants us to grant it: nothing more. To lament in our hearts the indispensable dealings we must have with the world; not to take into account at all the judgments of the world, nor its scorn, mockery or persecutions; not to be ashamed before it of the fulfillment of our duties and the practice of the Gospel, nor to deviate in anything from what God and our conscience dictate to us for fear of what the world may say or think. In a century as corrupt as ours, in order to fully triumph in human respect, it will be necessary to

to sustain many combats, to overcome many obstacles, to despise many bad habits, to trample underfoot many prejudices. This is one of the articles that must be rigorously examined, without making the slightest concession. Death to the senses and immoderate care

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It is necessary to be on guard against mollicism, the love of comfort, sensuality; to give the body only what is necessary for food, sleep and clothing; to mortify it from time to time with certain privations, and if health permits, if God inspires it and the confessor or director approves it, to impose some afflictive punishments on it. Above all, do not grant them anything dangerous to their eyes and ears, and avoid everything that can affect our soul. our body.

Death to character and natural defects.

No

It is a small thing to reform one’s own character in such a way that we retain only what is good in it, correcting all that is defective in it. Many of the saints venerated by the Church were not entirely dead in this respect. Not all of them were Augustine or Francis de Sales, in whom the fiery character became entirely tamed and submitted to grace. The great procedure to achieve this without so much study or reflection consists in keeping a watchful eye on the guarding of the heart; in repressing the first movements; in not speaking or acting on the impulse of one’s own mood, one’s own whim, one’s own impetuosity; in always remaining in peace and in full possession of oneself. Why should we not do for God and with the help of his grace what so many men in the world do for the interest of their fortune? Death

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own spirit.

This point is of great length and of very difficult practice. In the first place, in ordinary things it is necessary to submit the spirit and the will to reason; not to let ourselves be carried away by whims and fancies; not to be obstinate in our own judgment, to listen to the reasons of others and to condescend to them if they seem good to us; to submit voluntarily to the opinion and the desire of others in indifferent things. As regards our spiritual conduct, we must simply receive what God deigns to give us and remain where he places us, without desiring anything else; not to judge our own state or the operations of grace; to practice obedience of judgment and will in relation to the director; to

repress excessive activity of the spirit and to keep it always in perfect dependence on God, just as we should always be in perfect dependence on the Lord.

476

P.11L Ascetical-mystical aspect of religious life

We should not reflect on ourselves, we should not reason excessively, but let ourselves be led by the divine instinct, which is far superior to our lights and reasoning; we should not grant anything in our readings to the curiosity of the spirit, seeking simply to nourish the heart and not making efforts to understand and deepen everything in spiritual books; a dangerous thing, which would fill us with false ideas, would make us presumptuous and would expose us to many illusions. Let us believe that God will give us the lights as we need them and let us not try to go further, but let us humbly receive them and put them into practice. In general, let us always keep our spirit and our heart in a certain emptiness, so that God may fill it at His pleasure with what He wills. Death to the esteem and love of ourselves. This death, as we can see, is becoming more and more intimate; therefore, if there is something deeply rooted in us, it is certainly pride and self-love. These are the two great enemies of God and, consequently, ours. God pursues and attacks them relentlessly in a soul that has given herself to him. She, for her part, has nothing else to do but to let him work and to support him when the occasion arises. Death to spiritual consolations. The day comes when God withdraws them from the soul. No pleasure in anything. Everything bothers it, everything annoys it, everything* tires it; it no longer feels the presence of God in it. It is necessary for the soul to be generous, to consent to these privations, to accustom itself to seek itself in nothing, to love God as a pure love and to serve Him for His own sake and at its own

expense. In these conditions, the service of God costs nature a great deal; it cries out, complains, becomes angry, and despairs. We must let it cry out and be more faithful to God than ever; we must lead the victim to the sacrifice without taking its repugnances into account at all. Death to the supports and assurances in relation to the

As long as the soul, in the midst of its temptations and trials, still finds some support in the depths of its conscience, some support in its spiritual director and does not believe itself to be completely abandoned by God, it is relatively easy for it to bear the greatest sorrows; but when it sees itself as if suspended in the air, when it sees hell at its feet, when nothing sustains it and at every instant it believes itself to be at the point of being in the state of our soul.

When she is persuaded that God has abandoned her, that she is irretrievably lost, and that nothing can bring her out of her error, but that, on the contrary, everything contributes to confirm her in this persuasion, then her anguish is extreme and she needs heroic fortitude to persevere and to submit to all that God wills to dispose of her in time and eternity. Death to all property

with regard to the

The soul had appropriated the gifts of God, the virtues with which it is enriched, and felt a certain complacency in its own purity. God then strips it of everything, not in reality, but in appearance, and reduces it to complete nakedness; it no longer sees in itself neither gifts, nor virtues, nor anything supernatural; it no longer knows what it is, nor what it was, nor what it will become. Her sins, her

nothingness, her reprobation: this is all that she perceives in herself and of which she judges herself worthy. It is the consummation of mystical death. The resurrection and the glorious state will come later. Let us leave to God his secrets and say no more". As can be seen, total death to the self is the result of a long process of sanctification whose supreme summit - as we said above - not even all the saints were able to reach. But we must make a constant effort to approach the sublime goal proposed by St. Paul: "I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2:19-20). holiness.

314, We do not want to deprive the reader of some admirable pages written by Fr. Plus on this impressive subject 15: "It would be disloyal to conceal how much struggle is necessary to arrive at this liberator iam non ego. That is why there are so many Christians and so few saints. How many, even among the best, offer God perfect works? i Self-love is so subtle!"

Claude Lavergne dreamed of painting the Dominican Fathers of Toulouse "the gift of the rosary". He asked Father Lacordaire to give him a white habit, out of use, to dress his model with it: "I have what is suitable," said the Father, "and you are going to unburden my conscience. Here is a habit that I have the weakness to esteem. I did not want pieces to be taken from it to mend the others. It is the one I wore at Notre Dame de Paris when I delivered O'Connell's funeral oration and my discourse on the vocation of the French nation. From now on I will no longer be attached to it. Take it!" 1S Cf. P. Plus, S. I" Christ in us (Barcelona 1943) p. 140-144,

If the saints can have these little hobbies, what can we think of ourselves? Even where it is believed, and perhaps we ourselves believe, that we give everything, how often there is a lack of sincerity! 16 And yet, if we aspire to the fullness of life, we must consent to the fullness of death. Does not the Imitation of Christ tell us, with its imperturbable and calm gentleness: “My son, you must give everything to obtain everything and reserve nothing for yourself”? 17 In reality, this everything can be and will be very different according to the souls. For some, it is an absolute whole: complete detachment. St. Francis of Assisi hears a priest recite at Mass these words of the Gospel: “Do not possess gold or silver; do not carry a purse or two tunics or shoes. He immediately throws away with horror the purse, takes off his shoes and the cloak he wears over his tunic…. Shortly afterwards, Clare Scifi declared to him that she too wanted to belong to Jesus Christ: “If you want me to have faith in you,” St. Francis replied, “do as I tell you: put on a sack and go through the town begging for your bread. Clare obeyed. The neighbors did not recognize her, but St. Francis did. During Lent, in Vannes, Catherine de Francheville, whose name is inseparable from the work of the retreats, attended the sermons: “You say that you belong to Jesus Christ; prove it, then”. This sentence impressed her. She went to see her friends to encourage them to serve God better. “As for me, I want to be all his, and to show that I really want it, I beg you to cut off my hair”. And when they all refused, Elia herself cut it off. From that day on, her heart ceased to be broken, and the other sacrifices seemed to cost her nothing.

For the great majority of souls, everything will be relative. God does not demand the same measure of renunciation from everyone. Moreover, let us not believe that we can make sacrifices of importance without bleeding. We easily consent to give God many things so long as we can keep the one thing he asks of us. St. Ignatius understood well this

instinct to conserve 16 A striking example of this lack of sincerity that is often found in us. The great composer Lulli, in his last illness, received a visit from his confessor, who obliged him, if he wanted absolution, to throw into the fire the beginning of a rather licentious opera on which he was working. He resisted for a long time, but finally gave in. The confessor left. A visitor arrived and reprimanded the artist for his sacrifice. Lulli smiled and said very quietly: “I have kept a second copy!” Who among us has never kept a “second copy”? 17 L.3 c.27”

** Champion, Mess. du C. de J. (Nov. 1909) 649.

He therefore proposes to us his meditation on the “three binaries” or classes of persons, whose purpose is to lead the one who says: “Everything, except that,” to sacrifice precisely that. “The most painful remedy you want (said to the hospital chaplain a young man whose sciatic nerve had been cut and who was in danger of not recovering the movement of his leg), but this remedy, never!” It was a matter of searching with the forceps the two extremities of the cut nerve, approaching them skillfully, counting on the vital force, to operate the joint. “But, my son, all other remedies are ineffective; there is only this one of real efficacy. It will be painful, to be sure, but being the only one…” And the poor wounded man spent eight days before consenting. Oh, if only we did not hesitate more than eight days before a sacrifice!)

The sacrifices required will sometimes be different from what we had planned. Generally they will be in themselves of little importance. Our self-love does not refuse to consider as

possible great sacrifices, ready on the occasion to retract l9. The insignificant sacrifices we estimate, too easily, as unworthy of us. However, as a rule, God does not ask us for others. Nothingnesses, but nothingnesses that discomfort us and sometimes terrify us. We are like the child who promises to distribute some of his toys to the poor. But when he goes to the closet crammed with them, to choose: “Not this one; I am too fond of it!” To know how to sacrifice the small things is the best demonstration of great energy. One day, St. Madeleine de Pazzis was meditating on this verse from Isaiah: “They shall take wings like eagles, they shall fly and not faint, they shall run and not be weary”. The Lord made her see those who do not go forward or do it slowly. Then those who walk with a certain swiftness. “They have charity, but they are not entirely dead to self-love. They do not seek purely my will in everything. They seek something outside of me at the same time that they seek me…” “Those who run-how few there are-are altogether dead to self. They do not seek knowledge of spiritual things out of self-interest or desire for consolations, but with perfect yielding to my will…” “Ordinarily the rapidity of the race is in proportion to the life of the one who runs. But here it is in proportion to his death. It is true that this death is the true life that leads him to my breast…. I want to give you here this dead life” 20.

The Apostle was right when he wrote to his converts: “Consider your vocation” (I Cor 1:26). We cannot meditate on it too much. This vocation consists in living in common (Avis spirituels XXII, “La parole intérieure”, in Oeuvres [ed. Vivés, 1854] t.i p.605). 10 Quoted in Saudrjbau, Les divines paroles t.2 P.22S.

Pili. The asthetic-psycho-mystical aspect of religious life

In union with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ; “in being one with Jesus Christ”; in living as he lived, “in

imitation of him who called us”, “being holy as he himself is holy”. Living a completely risen life, always seeking the things that are above, remembering only heaven: Nostra conversatio in caelis e$t (Phil 3:20). Let us now continue our examination of the Gospel text, the exposition of which constitutes the subject matter of this chapter.

3.

“… take up your cross every day…”

315 To follow Christ, self-denial is not enough, even in the most perfect and loftiest form just mentioned; we must also take up our daily cross and follow in his bloody footsteps to the summit of Calvary. We must never worry about tomorrow: “Let each day be sufficient for its own labour” (Mt 6:34). Tomorrow is in God’s hands, and we do not even know if it will dawn for us. But, day by day, we must carry our own cross in pursuit of Jesus Christ, not only with resignation, but with true joy, in imitation of St. Paul, who gloried in nothing other than the cross of Jesus Christ (cf. Gal 6:14), and of the other apostles, who “went away rejoicing in the presence of the Sanhedrin because they had been worthy to suffer outrage for the name of Jesus” (Acts 5:41). Commenting precisely on these words: “let him take up his cross every day,” St. Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort writes in his wonderful Circular Letter to the Friends of the Cross 21: Tolíat crucem suam, “let him carry his cross”; suam, his cross. Let this man, that man, that exceptional woman-de ultimis finibus pretium eiust that the whole earth from one end to the other could not pay 22-take with joy, embrace with enthusiasm and carry on his shoulders with courage his cross and not that of another; his cross, that my Wisdom made for him, with number, weight and measure; His cross, whose four dimensions I traced by my own hand with extraordinary accuracy, that is, its thickness, its length, its

width and its depth; His cross, which I myself have carved for him from a piece of the one carried by me on Calvary, as a sign of the infinite goodness with which I love him; His cross, which is the greatest gift that I can give to my chosen ones on this earth; His cross, composed: -as to its thickness; of losses of goods, of humiliations, of contempt, of pains, of sicknesses, and of spiritual sorrows, which21 It can be seen in its entirety in Works of St. Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort (BAC, Madrid IQ54) pp.230-257. The passage we quote is on pages 238-239* 22 Allusion to the strong woman, who "is worth much more than pearls" (cf. Prov 3MÓ). 23 These dimensions are consistent with those listed by the apostle Paul in his epistle to the Ephesians (3:18). The application he then makes. St. Louis is undoubtedly most inspired.

les, by my permission, will accompany him every day until his death-as to its length: of a certain duration of months or days in' which he will be crushed by calumny, prostrated in his bed, reduced to beggary and a prey to temptations, to aridities, abandonments and other spiritual distresses; -as to its breadth: of all the hardest and most bitter circumstances, whether they come from his friends, his servants or his relatives; - as for his depth: of the most hidden sorrows with which I will afflict him, without it being given to him to find consolation in creatures, which, by my command, will turn their backs on him and join with me to make him suffer. Tollat, let him carry her, and let him not drag her, nor cast her from himself, nor cut her off, nor hide her. That is to say, let him carry her upright, without impatience or repugnance, without complaint or willful criticism, without partiality or natural regard, without blush and without human respect.

Tollat, let him place it on his forehead, saying with St. Paul: Mihi ab$it gloriari nisi in cruce Domini nostri Iesu Christi: “God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of Jesus Christ, my Master” (Gal 6:4). May he carry it on his shoulders after the example of Jesus Christ, so that this cross may become the weapon of his conquests and the scepter of his empire (cf. Is 9:6). Finally, may he engrave it in his heart through love, so that it may be transformed into a burning bush that night and day will burn with the pure love of God without being consumed. Crucem, the cross; let him bear it, for there is nothing so necessary, so useful, so sweet and so glorious as to suffer something for Jesus Christ”.

4.

“…and follow me.”

3ió* Let us listen to St. Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort expounding in a sublime way this last word of the Gospel text we have been commenting on 24: “But it is not enough to suffer; the world and the devil also have their martyrs; we must suffer and carry our cross in the footsteps of Jesus Christ: sequatur me, let him follow me.To achieve this, here are the rules that you must observe: 1. a Do not seek crosses on purpose or through your own fault: you must not do evil that good may come to you (cf. Rom 3:8). Without special inspiration, do not do things foolishly so as to attract the scorn of men. Rather, imitate Jesus Christ, of whom it was said that he did all things well (Me 7:37), not out of self-love or vanity, but to please God and to gain your neighbor. And if for your part you do your duty as well as you can, you will not lack for setbacks, persecutions and scorns that divine Providence will send you against your will and without your choice.

2. a If you are going to do something indifferent, but of which your neighbor could be scandalized, even if for no reason, refrain 24 Cf. Circular Letter to Friends, de bx Cruz p. 248-253 (e<L BAC). Religious Life

to do it out of charity to avoid the scandal of the little ones, and the heroic act of charity that you do on this occasion is worth infinitely more than what you were doing or wanted to do. However, if the good that you do is necessary or useful to your neighbor and some Pharisee or evil spirit is scandalized without reason, consult with a prudent person if what you do is necessary and very useful to the common neighbor, and if he judges so, and if he so judges, go on with your work and let them say as long as they let you work, answering at this juncture what Our Lord answered to those disciples who came to tell him that the scribes and Pharisees were scandalized by his words and deeds: Let them alone; do you not see that they are blind? (Mt 15:14)3. a The fact that some saints and illustrious men have asked for, sought and even obtained for themselves, by ridiculous actions, crosses, scorn and humiliation, should not move us but to adore and admire the extraordinary operation of the Holy Spirit in their souls and to humble ourselves at the sight of such sublime virtue, without pretending to fly so high, since, next to those swift eagles and those roaring lions, we are nothing but wet chickens and dead dogs. 4. a You can, however, and must ask for the science of the cross, a tasty and experimental science of the truth, which makes us see in the light of faith the most hidden mysteries, among them that of the cross; but this is only attained by dint of great labors, deep humiliations and fervent prayers. If you feel the need of this principal spirit (Ps 50:14), which helps you to

bear the heaviest crosses with courage; of this good and gentle spirit (Le 11:13), which in the upper region of the soul makes you taste the most repugnant bitterness; of this healthy and upright spirit (Ps 50:12), which seeks only God; of this knowledge of the cross, which encloses the most difficult crosses in your heart; of this knowledge of the cross, which is the source of your faith (Ps 50:14), and of this knowledge of the cross (Ps 50:14); In a word, if you feel the need of that infinite treasure whose good use makes the soul a sharer in the friendship of God (Sap 7:14), ask for wisdom, ask for it unceasingly and insistently, without hesitation, without fear of not attaining it (cf. Iac 1:5 and 6) and you will infallibly attain it, and then you will clearly understand, from your own experience, how it is possible to desire, to seek and to taste the cross. 5. a When through ignorance, and even through your own fault, you have committed any wrongdoing that brings you some cross, humble yourselves immediately within yourselves, under the omnipotent gaze of God (1 Petr 5:6) without any voluntary disturbance (1 Petr 5:6).

For example, saying within yourself: “These are the fruits of my garden, O Lord. And if there is any sin in your fault, accept the humiliation that results from it as an expiatory punishment; and if there is none, as a humiliation of your pride. It is very common for God to permit his best servants, the most exalted in his grace, to commit faults of the most affronting kind, in order to lower them in his own eyes and in the sight of men, to take away from them the sight and the proud thought of the graces he communicates to them and of the good they do, so that “no flesh, as the Holy Spirit says, may boast before the worship of God” (I Cor. 1:29). 6. a

Be fully assured that everything in us is corrupted by the sin of Adam and by our present sins, and not only the senses of the body, but all the powers of our soul; so that as soon as our corrupt body looks upon any grace of God in us with reflection and complacency, that gift, that act, that step, is tarnished and corrupted, and God turns his divine gaze away from it. If already the glances and thoughts of the intelligence thus spoil its best acts and the most divine gifts, what shall we say when it is a question of acts of our own will, which are even more corrupted than those of the understanding? Let us not be surprised, then, that the Lord is pleased to hide his own in the folds of his face (Ps 30:21), so that neither the eyes of men nor their own knowledge may sully them. And to hide them in this way, what things does this jealous God permit! How many temptations he allows them! How many stumbling blocks he permits! How many temptations he allows them to be involved in, like St. Paul! (2 Cor 12:7) In what uncertainties, darkness and perplexities does he leave them! Oh, how admirable is God in his saints and in the paths he makes them follow to lead them to humility and holiness! 7. a Do not believe, then, like the vain and self-satisfied devotees, that your crosses are enormous, that they are proof of your fidelity and testimony of a singular love of God for you. This insidiousness of spiritual pride is very fine and delicate, but full of poison. You should rather believe; 1) that your pride and your delicacy lead you to consider as beams what are but straws, as sores, the simple stings; as an elephant, to a 25 In the original “est tout corrumpu”. In the Treatise on True Devotion, the saint puts the extenuating phrase “presque entiérenient…. corrumpus*.

2) that the crosses that God sends you are a loving punishment for your sins, rather than a sign of special predilection; 3) that, whatever the crosses and humiliations that God sends you, He forgives you countless others, merited by the enormity of your crimes, which you should not consider except through the enormity of your crimes, which you should not consider as anything else but a punishment for your sins; 3) that, whatever the crosses and humiliations He sends you, He forgives you countless others, merited by the enormity of your crimes, which you should not consider except through the holiness of God, who bears nothing impure and against which you have rebelled; through a God who died overwhelmed with sorrow because of your sins, and through an eternal hell which you have deserved a thousand and perhaps a hundred thousand times; 4) that in the patience which you show in suffering there is much more human and natural mingled than you think; proof of this are those glances, that seeking consolations by stealth, those natural expansions with your friends, perhaps with your director; those apologies so far-fetched and so ready; those complaints or rather those maledictions.against those who have done you wrong, and which you so well season and present so charitably; that turning and turning over your evils and those delicate complacencies, in them; that Luciferian belief that you are something great* I would never finish if I wanted to describe here the twists and turns of nature even in sufferings* 8.a Take advantage and even profit from the small sufferings more than from the great ones. God does not care so much for what one suffers as for how one suffers. To suffer much and badly is to suffer like the damned; to suffer a lot and with vigor for a bad cause is to suffer like a martyr of the devil; to suffer little or much, but to suffer it for God, is to suffer like a saint. If it could be truly said that we can choose our crosses, we should opt for the small and unseemly ones, if they are presented on a par with the great and

conspicuous ones. Human pride may ask for, search for, and even choose and embrace the large and dazzling crosses; but to choose and bear joyfully the small and obscure ones can only be the fruit of a very great grace and of a great fidelity to God. Do what the merchant does at the counter: take advantage of everything; do not waste the smallest particle of the true cross, even if it is only the sting of a fly or a pin, a neighbor's genius, a small insult of a slight, the loss of some money, a small disturbance of the soul, a slight tiredness of the body, some discomfort, *etc.* Take advantage of everything, like the druggist in his store, and in a short time you will be enriched according to God, as he was.

He enriches himself by putting penny by penny into his accountant. At the slightest setback that befalls you, say: "(Blessed be God! 2.5 Thank you, Lord!", and then deposit in the memory of God, which is like your piggy bank, the cross that you have just won, and remember it no more except to say: "A thousand thanks, Lord"; or else: "Mercy!" 9. We must distinguish three kinds of love: sensible love, rational love, and faithful and supreme love; in other words, the love of the lower part, which is the flesh; the love of the higher part, which is reason; and the love of the supreme part or summit of the soul, which is the intelligence enlightened by faith. God does not require that you love the cross with the love that the flesh feels. Since it is all corruption and disorder, whatever is born of it is defiled. Moreover, it cannot of itself be subject to the will of God or to his crucifying law. That is why our Lord, in the Garden of Olives, speaking to his Father, said: Thy will be done, and not mine (Le 22:42). If the lower part of man in Jesus Christ, in whom everything was holy, could not love the cross without some interruption,

how can we expect anything else from ours, which is only corruption? Occasionally, it is true, we may experience joy, even sensible joy, in our suffering, as many saints felt it; but such joy does not come from the flesh, although it is found in it; it comes only from the upper part, so full of the divine joy of the Holy Spirit, that it comes to redound in the lower part, so that in those moments the most crucified person can say: “My heart and my flesh rejoiced in the living God” (Ps 83:3). There is another love of the cross that I have called rational, which is rooted in the higher part of man, which is reason. It is an entirely spiritual love; and since it is born of knowing the happiness that is found in suffering for God, it is perceptible and perceived by the soul; it rejoices it interiorly and strengthens it. But this rational love, though excellent, is not always necessary to suffer joyfully and according to God. Hence there is another love of the summit and apex of the soul, say the masters of the spiritual life-or of the intelligence, say the philosophers-by which, although some rational satisfaction is not felt in the soul, nevertheless it is loved and known26 Among the canticles which tradition attributes to the saint is one, considered by all to be authentic, which has for its refrain; “Dieu soit bénil Dieu soit béni!”

rea, by the light of faith alone, the cross that one carries, even if often all is war and shock in the lower part, which groans, complains and cries and tries to console itself, so that one says with Jesus Christ: My Father, thy will and not mine be done (Le 22:42); or with the Blessed Virgin: Behold the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to thy word (Le 1:38). With one of these two upper loves we must love and accept the cross. 10. Determine, my dear

Friends of the Cross, to suffer any kind of cross without exception and without choice; any poverty, any injustice, any loss, any sickness, any humiliation, any contradiction, any slander, any dryness, any abandonment, any exterior or interior pain, saying always: My heart is ready, my God; my heart is ready (Ps 107:2; 56:8). Be ready, then, to be abandoned by men and angels and even by God himself; to be persecuted, envied, betrayed, slandered, discredited and abandoned by all; to suffer hunger, thirst, begging, nakedness, banishment, imprisonment, hanging and all kinds of tortures, even if you do not deserve them, for the crimes you are accused of. Imagine, finally, that after having lost your goods and your honor, after having been thrown out of your own house, like Job and St. Elizabeth, Queen of Hungary, you are thrown into the mud like this saint or dragged over a dunghill like the holy Job, stinking and covered with ulcers, without a cloth to put over your sores, without a piece of bread, which is denied neither to dog nor horse, and that, in the midst of these extreme evils, God forsakes you, exposed to all the temptations of the demons, without letting fall into your soul the slightest sensible consolation. There you have, believe it firmly, the sublime goal of divine glory and of the true happiness to which the authentic and perfect friend of the cross must aspire”.

Chapter 13

THE PERFECT IMITATION OF JESUS CHRIST The whole Christian life, like the whole religious life, consists essentially in the perfect imitation of Jesus Christ. No one will be a saint except to the extent that he succeeds in reproducing in his soul the features of the physiognomy of Jesus Christ. The perfection of

charity-the end of the religious life-cannot be attained by any other path than that of full incorporation into Christ, to the point of being able to exclaim with St. Paul: “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20). We have spoken at length about this most basic and fundamental matter in another of our works. Here we will limit ourselves to a few considerations whose absence would be unforgivable in a work dedicated to Christian perfection in the religious state. We will briefly set forth the necessity, advantages, demands and practice of the perfect imitation of Jesus Christ 1 2. 1,

Need for the imitation of Jesus Christ

317, The imitation of Jesus Christ is so necessary that without it there can be no Christian life, nor sanctification, nor salvation. a) Without it there can be no Christian life. To take the Gospel as a rule of conduct and the Savior as a model, that is, in two words, the exact meaning of the sublime name of Christian. Only he can bear this name,” says St. Cyprian, “who tries to reproduce in himself, as far as

possible, the sentiments, the customs and the life of Jesus Christ. According to St. Basil, the imitation of Jesus Christ is the very definition of Christianity: Definitio christianismi est imitatio Christi",

In baptism we have renounced the devil and his works, the world and its maxims, pomps and vanities; so that, detached from every other bond, we may be united to the Savior by a sincere love and perfect imitation. By receiving this first sacrament we clothe ourselves with Jesus Christ, according to the expression of St. Paul: "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). If Jesus Christ is our clothing," says St. Bernard, "he must manifestly appear in us; let us therefore show his charity, his gentleness, his patience, all his virtues. The great apostle St. Paul wants his features to be so perfectly represented in us that his life can be recognized in our own bodies: "So that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our bodies" (2 Cor 4:10). 1 Cf. Jesus Christ and the Christian Life (BAC, Madrid 1961). 2 Cf. Chaignon, S. I., Méditations relígieuses (Lydn 1908) vol.3 p.49-72, whose precious teachings we have translated with some minor adjustments.

Let us consider, above all, how clearly Jesus Christ himself taught us this obligation: "You call me Master and Lord, and you say well, for indeed I am. If I then have washed your feet, being your Lord and Teacher, you ought also to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done" (Acts 13:13-15).

One is a disciple of other teachers by listening to them, and one is a disciple of Christ by listening to HIM The proper

thing for a disciple is to learn. Christ says to us: “Learn from me” (Mt 11:29). And we are to learn not only the truths expressed by his word, but also those made visible by his example; not only what he said, but what he did and what he was. His own life was the greatest and most impressive of his teachings. To resemble Jesus Christ, to become by perfect imitation what he was: this is the true spirit, the very substance of Christianity. Without this there can be no Christian life and the name Christian or religious is a pure illusion.

h) Without it there can be neither sanctification nor salvation. This is a rigorous and inevitable consequence of what we have just said: how could we be saints, how could we be saved without fulfilling the essential obligations of Christianity? We have just seen that the imitation of Jesus Christ is the first duty of the Christian. But since it is of the utmost importance that our soul, in the absence of nobler motives, should decide to follow the Savior for the most pressing of all interests, let us listen to St. Paul: “Those whom God has foreseen from all eternity to belong to the number of the elect, he has predestined to be conformed to his Son by the imitation of his virtues, so that the Son may be the firstborn among many brethren” (cf. Rom. 8:29). “He is the head of the body of the elect” (cf. Eph. 1:22). We will not be admitted to the kingdom of heaven unless we are brothers of Jesus Christ and members of his Mystical Body; but how can he recognize us as his brothers, if our feelings and our works do not give us a family resemblance to him? Will we be his true members if we are not animated by his same spirit, if we do not live his own life? Let us add that, predestination to eternal glory being the effect of a special tenderness by which God distinguishes and chooses us, what attracts this look of benevolence and this paternal predilection is the image of His beloved Son that He sees in

us, which He Himself has impressed upon us by His grace seconded by our cooperation. The only object of the

The Father's pleasure is his Son. The same reason he has for loving himself infinitely, since he is infinitely perfect, leads him to love infinitely his Word, who is his consubstantial image. Outside of himself, the Father does not properly love except Jesus Christ, and for this very reason we are not pleasing to him except in Jesus Christ. Only "in him alone did he bless us with every spiritual blessing in heaven… and predestine us in love to adoption as his children" (Eph. I, 3-5). If God finds in us a great likeness to his Son, he loves us very much and lavishes his benefits on us; if he finds little, he loves us less; if he finds none, we have no right to his love; and if he finds traits opposed to those of his divine Son, we are for him an object of hatred and he condemns and reproves us. This, then, is the fundamental point on which the Christian must continually examine himself. It is as impossible for him to be saved without resembling, at least to some degree, the model of all the predestined, as it is for him to resemble Him without being saved. The other motives on which his hope rests, though consoling, cannot take away all anxiety; but his resemblance to the Savior is at the same time the most efficacious cause, the most certain guarantee, and the most infallible sign of his predestination, 2. 318,

Advantages of the imitation of Jesus Christ

Here are some of the most important ones:

a) It dispels all our doubts and concerns. Just as in order not to make a mistake in the appreciation of an object that we

can barely discern in the dark, we bring a light close to it, so to determine with certainty the value of a human act it is enough to compare it with the examples of the Savior. Is He not “the light that enlightens every man who comes into this world” (Io 1,9) and “the Truth itself” (Io 14,6)? (Io 14,6). We are in darkness, not knowing where to put our feet so as not to fall into the abyss; but the Word of God, like a divine lamp, directs us with infallible clarity; “Your word is a lamp to my feet, the light of my path” (Ps 118:105). This lamp,” says St. Bonaventure, “is a torch in an earthen vessel. The vessel is the holy humanity of Jesus; the light that shines in it represents his divinity; our life is the path we walk; our ignorances are the darkness that covers us.

We have more than enough reasons to distrust our judgments, we are so exposed to take the appearances of our own judgments, we are so exposed to take the appearances of our own judgments.

How can we guard ourselves against such errors? By following Jesus Christ, who goes before us, enlightening us with the splendor of his virtues. We can never deceive ourselves by taking infinite wisdom as our guide. If we unhesitatingly follow the light of grace, which is in Him and springs from His examples, we will infallibly arrive at the light of the glory which He has prepared for His elect. Just as to convince my intelligence and reduce it to the obedience of faith there is nothing so effective as this maxim: “The Son of God has said this,” so also, for my conduct and direction, nothing should have as much force as these words of the Son of God himself: “I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done” (Acts 13:15). Precious assurance!

Often we do not know which side to take or we are uneasy about the one we have already taken. Sacred Scripture clearly warns us that “there are ways that seem right to a man, but in the end they are ways of death” (Prov 16:25). But let us be reassured: we will never walk this disastrous path if we follow in the footsteps of our Savior. Our life will be holy and perfect to the degree that it conforms to the life of Jesus Christ. b) Fortify our weakness. If we often lack the light to avoid evil and do good, even more often we lack the energy and vigor to walk the path of virtue. But the imitation of the Man-God is an abundant source of energy, by the example he gives us and by the grace that accompanies this example. It is true, indeed, that to feel drawn to a noble and holy action it is often enough to witness it. A soldier feels his courage strengthened when he fights before the eyes of a brave captain. Gideon wanted to excite the courage of his warriors, it was enough for him to simply tell them: “Look at me and do as you see me do. As soon as I come to the borders of the camp, do as I do” (Jud 7:17). When the son of Simon Maccabeus saw the hesitation of his soldiers when they had to cross a torrent, he went in first, and they all followed him at once (cf. 1 Maccabees 16:6). However weak and feeble one may be, can one contemplate the Savior living in the most extreme poverty, full of scorn and suffering, sacrificing his honor and his life for us, without being filled with holy emulation? By

On the other hand, a powerful aid accompanies this already stimulating example. Jesus Christ, in fact, is a living and life-giving model. At the same time that he makes the light of his works shine before our eyes and urges us to imitate him by the beauty of his examples, he gives us by his grace the

energy and strength to imitate him in fact. “He is man*,” says St. Bernard, “and as such is clothed with my weaknesses and frailties so that I may see in Him what I must do and suffer; but He is also almighty God, to give me victory in my struggles. Let us therefore walk in his footsteps and never fear to lose heart; he sustains those who follow him. The closer we come to the beginning of our strength, the stronger we will be. We read in the life of St. Wenceslaus, Prince of Bohemia, that while walking barefoot in the snow on a harsh winter night to visit Jesus sacramentalized in different churches, the page who accompanied him complained about the excessive cold that tormented his feet: “Put your feet in the footprints left by mine,” replied the holy prince, “and perhaps you will experience relief. Hardly had the page obeyed, when his feet immediately reacted to the comforting warmth that flowed from the snow melted by the burning feet of his lord and master. Impressive image of what happens every day to generous souls who decide to truly imitate Jesus Christ. This good Master, who wanted to drink to the dregs the cup of all sufferings for our love, left us only a few drops of bitterness. The thorns of the road bloodied his divine feet, but when we stepped on them we found them devoid of their points. By the mere fact that we strive to follow Him, we do a thing so pleasing in His sight that He considers Himself obliged, in a certain sense, to come to our aid; and with His grace we can do all things.

c) It softens and sweetens our sorrows. We are never alone in our sufferings, and we can all apply to ourselves what he said of his faithful servant: “I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and glorify him” (Ps 90:15). He wanted to choose for Himself the hardest existence, the most humble, the most full of contradictions, so that there would never be in our lives such painful moments and bitter situations that He would not have the right to say to us: “I have given you

an example… What you suffer, you suffer. What you suffer, I suffered for you. Are you poor? Well, I was very poor in Bethlehem, in Nazareth, in my public life, in my death naked on a cross. Have they attacked your honor? Remember my silence in the midst of slander and reproach; behold your God clothed in the white garments of the insane in Herod’s palace. Have your friends abandoned you and betrayed you? Behold me nailed to the cross, forsaken by my friends, insulted by my enemies.

Does it seem to you that God himself has withdrawn from you? I experienced this immense pain when I exclaimed from the cross: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? (Mt 27:46). Mix your tears with mine and they will no longer be so bitter. A cross carried by two is less heavy. The disciple must not be more than his master. Do you want to be delicate members of a head crowned with thorns?” These reflections, well deepened, have more than enough strength to soften all sorrows and soothe all pains. d)

Sanctifies our

after virtues.

actions, and perfects

nues It is an undisputed theological principle that the

The holiness and merit of our internal or external actions depend on the end we have proposed to ourselves and on the principle at work in us in carrying them out. But what end can we propose to ourselves that is not perfect if we apply ourselves to reproduce in ourselves the model of all

perfection, which is Christ? If we associate ourselves with the intentions of Jesus Christ, if we make them our own-as everyone who seeks to imitate him perfectly must do-it is impossible to act with a more upright intention. What did he seek throughout his life but the glory of the Father (cf. lo 17:1) and the perfect fulfillment of his divine will (cf. lo 8:29)? (cf. lo 8:29). It is very useful to repeat frequently with our mouth or in the depths of our heart: “I unite myself, O Jesus, to the intentions that animated your soul when you offered to your Father the tribute of your praises while you conversed among men. I unite myself to all your occupations, to all your sufferings, to the very care you took of your body. I do not want to have other points of view or other desires or intentions but yours)).

Moreover, it is when I dedicate myself to imitating the Savior that I truly become a Christian. For this is precisely what the Christian life consists in, in reproducing in ourselves the very life of Christ. We follow his prayer when we pray, his life of work when we work, his sufferings when we suffer. It is Christ himself who thinks, speaks, works and suffers in us when we follow the movement and inspiration of his spirit. Christ is in us as his Father is in him; and he works in us, in due proportion, ‘as the divinity works in his humanity: “I in them and you, Father, in me, that they may be consummated in unity” (Acts 17:23). i What excellence, what merits, what perfection Christ would give to our simplest works if we would allow him, freely.

The mind of our intelligence, our memory, our will and our senses! However imperfect the instrument may be, it would produce true masterpieces if it were to allow itself to be

docilely handled by the divine artist. Could an action in which God Himself takes the initiative and leads the way fail to have immense merit before Him? And what we say of our actions, even the most common ones, is equally true of our virtues: 'If we model them on those of the Son of God, if they take on His same form, if they are animated by His same spirit, they will leave nothing to be desired. Our patience, humility, gentleness..., all our virtues will be perfect if they conform to those of our divine model. e) 'Fulfill God's designs for us. Sublime is the destiny of Man. God wants us to have a triple resemblance to him: -of nature: "God created man in his own image" (Gen 1:27); -of perfection: "Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:42); _ ' . -Of happiness: "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1Lu 3:2).

Of these three likenesses, He gives us the first and the tefcefa; but we must concur with His grace to form in ourselves the second. The Word made flesh has come into the world to show us in his person how God works and lives, so that we may transport his action and his life into ourselves: "The imitation of Jesus Christ is the deification of man! If anyone," says Clement of Alexandria, "puts himself under the direction of a workman and asks him to teach him his trade, he will become a journeyman like him; if he goes to a military man, a merchant, a philosopher, an orator..., he will learn the same arts; and if he becomes a disciple of Christ, he will become like the Savior God, living and conversing among men. To produce in us this happy likeness tends each of the graces that we receive from God; all the work of the Holy Spirit has no other purpose than to form in us Jesus Christ. In what an illusion, then, do so many souls live who aspire to sanctification without giving to the imitation of Jesus Christ the decisive importance that it really has! They try to practice Christianity, forgetting that it consists entirely and totally in the perfect imitation of Jesus

Christ: “We must be saints in Jesus Christ and through Jesus Christ, or we will not be saints at all” (Jn 1:8).

no way. “No other name under heaven has been given to us by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). “In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col 2:9) “and of his fullness have we all received grace upon grace” (Io 1:16). “Without him we can do nothing” (Io 15:5); “but out of his immeasurable riches” (Eph 3:8) we must fill our souls “until we become perfect men, to the measure of the fullness of Christ himself” (Eph 4:13). 3*

Requirements for the perfect imitation of Jesus Christ

319 In reality, they boil down to one thing: to leave everything to follow him alone: “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me” (Mt 19:21). But, in reality, by giving up everything for Christ, we lose nothing and we will gain everything. Let us reflect a little on all this.

a)

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himself. These conditions were expressly set by Christ himself for anyone who wants to be his perfect disciple: “Whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot

be my disciple” (Le 14:33). It is necessary to be free from every hindrance, unburdened of every weight, in order to follow a guide who walks with giant steps (cf. Ps 18:6). Every attachment is a chain and a weight that immobilizes us or, at least, delays and slows down our journey towards God. But for detachment to be complete, it must extend to the denial of ourselves: “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Le 9:23). This is the true idea of evangelical renunciation. Giving to God all that we possess is a worthless sacrifice in his eyes if we do not add that of ourselves. It is our own heart that he asks of us first of all: “Give me your heart, my son, and set your eyes upon my ways” (Prov 23:26). This is why Jesus Christ makes perfect self-abnegation the basis of his divine morality, desiring that, to the affective abandonment of father, mother and all things, we should add the renunciation of ourselves and even contempt for our own life (cf. Le 14:26). In fact, it is considered that one has not completely detached oneself from what one’s will still craves, from what one’s heart still ardently loves.

b Nothing is lost by giving up everything to follow Christ. What are all the things we can give up here on earth?

Lies, vanity and nothingness. Why? Because our heart will always consider as nothing that which does not entirely satisfy its desires, but which, on the contrary, excites them more and more. Even if we possessed the whole world, our heart would still remain unsatisfied. St. Augustine rightly writes: “You have made us, Lord, for yourself, and our heart is restless and restless until it rests in you” 3. To what does everything that we can abandon for God come down?

Riches, relatives, honors, pleasures? Let us listen to a dying man telling us that all that passes away is nothing. Let us listen to St. Paul writing to the faithful in Corinth: “Therefore, brethren, tell yourselves that the time is short. It remains only for those who have wives to live as if they had none, for those who mourn as if they did not mourn, for those who rejoice as if they did not rejoice, for those who buy as if they do not possess, and for those who enjoy the world as if they do not enjoy; for the figure of this world is passing away” (I Cor 7:29-31).

Let us look closely at the reason he gives for inspiring this universal detachment: “Because the figure of this world is passing away”. As if to say: what is the world in itself? A figure, a shadow, a real nothingness. If only this shadow were permanent! But no; it is a shadow that passes away, a nothingness that vanishes. It is therefore evident that we lose nothing by giving up everything, whatever things we give up. On the other hand, whatever we might lose by this voluntary detachment will be replaced by God with unspeakable generosity. Let us remember the question that Christ himself asked his apostles and that will undoubtedly renew anyone who leaves everything to follow him: “When I sent you without purse, scrip or sandals, did you lack anything? They said, ‘Nothing’” (Le 22:35). And if you lacked nothing, what have you really lost by depriving yourselves of all things in order to abandon yourselves solely and entirely to the loving providence of your God? c) Everything is gained by leaving everything to follow Christ. Peter questioned his Master in the name of all the apostles and their imitators in the evangelical renunciation: “Lord, we have left all things and followed you”. Jesus answered: “Truly I tell you, there is no one who, having left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and the Gospel, will not receive a hundredfold now in this present time in houses and brothers and sisters and

mothers and children and fields, with persecutions, and eternal life in the age to come” (Me 10:28-30). 3 St. Augustine, Confessions l.i c.i n.i.

Beyond so great a good, is there anything else to desire? We gain everything, even in this life, by giving up everything for God’s sake. What a profound peace and what complete tranquility he enjoys who desires nothing! He who has nothing and desires nothing is troubled by absolutely nothing. Our desires are our tyrants; the only way to extinguish them is to take away the objects that feed them. Fire is extinguished when its fuel is taken away; passions die or weaken when we take away the objects that sustain them. Since we abandon everything by voluntary choice, we acquire detachment of spirit, not being agitated by a thousand tiresome reflections, by a thousand absorbing worries, by a thousand annoying restlessness. We also acquire detachment of heart; we are no longer tormented by turbulent desires, by a thousand fears, worries, cares and anxieties. The spirit and the heart find themselves in perfect peace, and is not perfect peace happiness, the hundredfold of all that we have left behind in order to follow Christ? To this we must add the formal promise of obtaining eternal life at the end of this brief earthly pilgrimage. God himself wants to be the infinite and eternal reward for the small sacrifice we make here on earth, abandoning everything for his love. He who loses everything to gain God loses nothing, and he who wants to gain everything in exchange for losing God loses everything.

4.

Practice of the perfect imitation of Jesus Christ

Three things will help us effectively to practice perfect imitation of Jesus Christ: to know him better, to love him more and more, and to consider him frequently as the supreme model of perfection. a) Know him better. St. Paul strongly exhorts all Christians to study Jesus Christ as a living book in which they will learn everything they need for their salvation (cf. Hebr 3:1), since in him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (cf. Col 2:3). V We deplore the sad situation of those who, not yet knowing Jesus Christ, wear before their eyes a veil which hides from them the beauty of his example: But those of us who have the joy of knowing him "behold," says St. Paul, "with unveiled face, the glory of the Lord as in a mirror, and we are trans

We are being formed into the same image, from glory to glory, as the Spirit of the Lord works in us" (2 Cor. 3:18). Jesus Christ is the adorable model, as shown to Moses on the summit of Mount Sinai: "Look, and make it according to the pattern that was shown to you on the mountain" (Ex 25:40). Jesus Christ is the divine blueprint on which the true tabernacle of the Lord, which is the Christian soul, must be built. But it is not enough to cast a superficial glance at this model. It is necessary to contemplate him with great and continuous application-consider yourself (Hebr 3:1)-in order to acquire a precise and profound knowledge, taking hold of all the details, of all the features of his divine physiognomy, so as to be able to reproduce them in our own soul. This is, properly speaking, the true science of the Christian, the only one of which St. Paul boasted (cf. Gal. 6:14), the only one he

unceasingly asked for his disciples (cf. Eph. 3:19). What do we know if we ignore Christ? He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end" (Rev 21:6). "And yet how little even those whom we consider his most fervent disciples know him! How many religious men and women deserve the reproach that Christ himself addressed to the Apostle Philip: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet you have not known me? (Io 14:9). He has long been in our midst through the most intimate and varied relationships: His Gospel in our hands, His cru2 before our eyes, His body our food and His blood our drink…, and yet we still do not know Him. He is like a stranger to us. If we knew him well, how different our heart would be from what it is at present in his divine eyes! Let us take it to heart to correct effectively this great disorder: let us adopt the holy Gospel as our bedside book, and let us meditate slowly, every day, on its divine teachings. If we loved our Lord as the saints loved him,* the books written by men would fall from our hands and we would be left with the Gospel of Jesus alone. The more we know Jesus Christ, the more we will love Him, for the profound knowledge of His divine perfections necessarily draws the heart to Him. In the last

years of St. Therese-"the greatest saint of modern times," in the words of St. Pius X-still the Gospel occupied her spirit and nourished her soul: "The holy Gospel," she wrote, "more than any other book, sustains my prayer; in it my poor little soul drinks to its taste. Each time I discover new lights, hidden and mysterious meanings. I understand and know by experience that the kingdom of God is within us (Le 17:21), Jesus does not need books or doctors to instruct souls". b) To love Him more and more. It is impossible to be enlightened

about the infinite perfections and rapturous charms of the Son of God made Man without the heart being irresistibly attracted to Him; and it is impossible to love Him without trying to become as much like Him as possible, since love is essentially imitative. Everything pleases us in the person we love; we adopt his tastes, his thoughts, his way of being, often without realizing it. We assimilate ourselves to the friend to the point of making of him another self: amicus alter ego. Three kinds of love that we should feel for Jesus Christ impel us to imitate him for three different reasons: love of esteem, love of affection or tenderness, love of interest. 1) If our love for Him comes from the high esteem we have for His infinite perfections, the inclination that impels us to elevate ourselves excites us to approach Him, who is greatness itself: Gloria magna est sequi Dominum (Eccl. 23:38). 2) The love of affection or tenderness inclines us to unite ourselves to the persons upon whom it falls; but there is no union possible without similarity of customs, without community of thoughts and feelings. Besides, when we truly love, we need to show it, and no one ignores that imitation is the most indisputable testimony of love. We can doubt the love we have for one another as long as it is limited to mere words; but if, in order to please us, someone renounces his most intimate inclinations and in a certain way divests himself of his own life in order to adopt ours, we cannot doubt the sincerity of that love. 3) As for the love of interest, it has been made clear in the preceding pages that in the imitation of our Lord Jesus Christ lies all our good and all our temporal and eternal gain. c

To consider him as the supreme model of perfection.

When a painter wants to copy a painting, he continually alternates his gaze from the model to the copy and from the copy to the model, and, as required by the conformity he wants to establish between the two, he retouches and

modifies the copy. Let us do the same with regard to the matter at hand. Do we want to imitate Jesus Christ perfectly? Let us fix the eyes of our soul on Him and then turn them towards ourselves. Let us try 4 Cf.

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of a soul c.8.

to transport to our life the virtues we admire in theirs. Let us destroy in ourselves everything that is not in harmony with the model we are trying to reproduce. Nothing is more excellent and indispensable than this imitation. We will be judged on it, and on it we must judge ourselves from now on. Cardinal De Bérulle said that to get an idea of what the Son of God would be like when conversing with men, he only needed to look at St. Francis de Sales, whose exterior conduct radiated such an air of holiness that seeing him seemed to be seeing Jesus. Have we reached this perfection? Could it be said that our exterior modesty recalls that of Jesus and that his life is manifested in our own body, as St. Paul wanted? (cf. I Cor 4:10). But above all we have to imitate the interior of his soul: what were his feelings in relation to humiliations, sufferings, poverty, pleasures, honors, all that which the world appreciates so much, and what do we think of it all? Do we find in ourselves his deep religion, his devouring zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls? Unfortunately, it is possible that we may resemble the model of the predestined as night resembles day; but this reflection, far from depressing our breath and courage, must enliven and inflame it. The less we have progressed thus far in this imitation, without which there can

be neither sanctification nor even salvation, the more we must strive to attain it. We must often ask ourselves: Quid nunc Christus? What would Jesus Christ do now in the place and circumstances in which I find myself? What would He think, what would He say, what would He do in my place? The Lord commands us to imprint Him as a divine seal on our heart and our arm (Cant 8:6). He wants all our works and feelings to be marked with his divine image, since nothing can enter heaven or produce any merit for us without bearing this sacred character. He tells us at the same time that love is strong as death (Song 8:6). O Jesus, to know you is to love you. It is principally at the sacred table, in the sharing of the bread of heaven, that you open the eyes of your disciples and burn them with the fire of your love. Come, then, good Master, and reveal to us your heart; ravish it with all the power of your charms. “Grant that we may unite ourselves to You inseparably, adore You indefatigably, serve You perseveringly, seek You faithfully, find You happily, and possess You eternally” (St. Anselm).

P.IIL Celico-Mystical Aspect of Religious Life Chapter

THE VIRGIN MARY. 321 By express provision of heaven, devotion to the Virgin Mary is not a luxury in the Christian life, but an essential condition, although entirely subordinate and dependent on Christ. God willed to associate Mary in such a way with the incarnation of the Word and the redemption of the human race that without her free consent neither the first nor, consequently, the second would have taken place. It is a common doctrine among the Holy Fathers, confirmed by theologians and ratified on different occasions by the supreme magisterium of the Church. The religious, who by his juridical state of perfection occupies an outstanding place in the Church, must also stand out for his deep and endearing devotion to Mary. He must carry her not only in the depths of his heart,

but also on his lips, so that he may always appear before the faithful as an ardent propagandist of the cult and devotion to Mary. . This is not the right place to repeat once again the great principles of Mariology. The religious must know and deepen his knowledge of Our Lady's theology, and for this purpose he should have recourse to specialized works. Here we will limit ourselves to presenting some aspects of this Marian theology that are more directly related to the religious as such. 1. Mary, Mother of all religious orders and congregations 322* Not only in her capacity as universal Mediatrix of all graces-then also, and to a very specific degree. In the sovereign grace of the foundation of a religious order or congregation, but by a clear and manifest intervention of Mary in the mind and heart of the founder or foundress, it can be said without exaggeration that the Virgin Mary is the true Mother and Foundress of all religious orders and congregations. Religious families," he writes in this regard, "can justly boast of having developed under her maternal protection. 1 Cf. Garrigou-Lagrange, O. P., La Madre del Salvador y nvestra vida interior (Buenos Aires 1947) p. 156*163; Alastruey, Tratado de la Virgen Santísima 2.a ed. (BAG, Madrid 1947) p.69-72. J. B. Terrien, $. I.# La Madre de Dios y Madre de ios hombres (Madrid 1942) p.2.4 vol.2 c.5 p.67-68 y 74*75 2

She watched over their cradle; or rather, she presided over their birth, they received life in her arms and came forth from her heart. As we go through their history, we are struck by the series of providential and marvelous events by which the Blessed Virgin wanted to demonstrate that she had truly carried them in her womb, and that they owed their existence and progress to her, after her Son. Entire volumes

could be written on such an interesting subject. A learned and pious writer of the Congregation of Clerics Regular of the Mother of God has composed a voluminous book to show how all the founders of religious orders and congregations have been singularly devoted to the Mother of God and, even more singularly, loved and protected by her. Whole volumes would be written if one wanted to tell in detail…. how, on the one hand, Mary has shown herself to be a true mother to the religious orders, a mother who, after God, has given them existence, has protected them in their development, has showered them with the most distinguished signs of her powerful assistance; And how, on the other hand, these same orders, as long as they have remained faithful to the spirit of their founders, have preserved the most tender and filial veneration, trust and love for this divine Mother, We refer the reader who wishes to study this most interesting part of their history to the "Annals" proper to each of them… Besides, apart from all the written or traditional testimonies, the very nature of the religious societies would be a sufficient guarantee of the solicitude and the more than maternal affection with which Mary surrounds them. How, indeed, could the Blessed Virgin remain a stranger, either to their institution, or to their preservation or to their works? Can she forget that her principal mission in this world is to promote the kingdom of her Son, to make flourish in it, in all its perfection, those virtues of which, after Him, she was the perfect paragon, to ruin in it the works of Satan, and to extinguish and exterminate heresies? Now this is what religious families tend to do, by their singular and certain vocation; this is where each one has its place, its reason for being and multiplying in the Church of God. Soon we will see in the catacombs the first representation of a religious consecration. The Pontiff, when consecrating a virgin to Christ, will show him with his finger the Virgin Mother with the child in her arms, as if to say: "Behold your protector,

your model and your mother". Yes, Mary would not be what she is if the religious, with a very special title, could not rest as sons in her maternal womb; and, reciprocally, these same religious would forget the act of their birth and the nature of their vocation if they did not strive to feel and foster in their hearts, more than all other Christians, sentiments of devotion, veneration and love for her who has given them so much".

These sentiments of profound veneration and deep love for Mary must be translated principally into the perfect imitation of her virtues. This is what we are going to study next. * 3

Cf. P.-Hippolyte Maracci, Fundatores mariani (Rome, Rome).

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PJll. Ascetical-mystical aspect of religious life.

502

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Mary, a perfect example of all Christian virtues

Since Mary is the "mirror of justice"-speculum iustitiae-and a perfect example of all the Christian virtues, it is impossible to examine them here in detail one by one, since we do not have enough space to do so, but we will study the most important-theological and cardinal virtues-and those most directly related to the religious life. a)

The theological virtues

As is well known, the theological virtues are three: faith, hope and charity. All three have God himself as their direct and immediate object-that is why they are and are called theological virtues-but each one is considered from a different point of view: faith, as the first principle of our supernatural knowledge (that is, as God the revealer); hope, as the first principle from which comes to us the effective help to attain eternal life (that is, as God the helper); and charity, as the ultimate end, infinitely lovable in itself (that is, as God infinite goodness). This last consideration is the most perfect of all, and for this reason charity is the first and most excellent of all the virtues: “Now these three remain: faith, hope, charity; but the most excellent of these is charity” (I Cor 13:13). Let us recall some traits of the most perfect way in which the Blessed Virgin practiced the theological virtues. Faith

323*

Let us listen to Fr. Garrigou-Lágrange 4:

*If one thinks of the natural perfection of Mary’s soul, the most perfect of all after that of the Savior, one must admit that her intelligence and nature were already endowed with great penetration and no less rectitude, and that these natural qualities did not cease to develop in the course of her life. Her infused faith was all the more profound on the part of the object, because of the revelation made to her, on the very day of the Annunciation, of the mysteries of the enflaming and redemption, and of the holy familiarity of every day with the Word made flesh. Subjectively, moreover, her faith was very firm, very certain and very prompt in its adherence, because these qualities of infused faith are so much greater the greater it is. Mary received faith to the greatest degree that ever existed, and the same must be said of her hope, because Jesus, who had the beatific vision

from the first instant of his conception, did not possess faith or hope, but the full light and possession of the eternal goods that have been promised to us. 4 Gf. o.c. p.r 19-120.

We could form no idea of the depth of Mary’s faith. At the Annunciation, as soon as the divine truth about the mystery of the redemptive Incarnation was sufficiently proposed to her, she believed. That is why St. Elizabeth said to her shortly afterwards: “Blessed are you who believed, for all that was spoken from the Lord will be fulfilled” (Le 1:45). At Christmas she sees her Son born in a stable, and believes that He is the Creator of the universe; she sees all the weakness of His infant body, and believes in His omnipotence; when He began to babble, she believes that He is wisdom itself; when she must flee with Him before the wrath of King Herod, she believes, nevertheless, that He is the King of kings, the Lord of lords, as St. John will say. On the day of the circumcision and the presentation in the temple, his faith becomes clearer and clearer about the mystery of redemption…. During the Passion, when the apostles, except St. John, go away, she appears at the foot of the cross, standing, without fainting; she always believes that her Son is truly the Son of God, God also, and that He is, as the Precursor said, “the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world”; that, overcome in appearance, He is the conqueror of the devil and of sin and that in three days He will be the conqueror of death, through the Resurrection, as He has announced. This act of faith of Mary at the foot of Calvary was, in that dark hour, the greatest and most profound act of faith that ever existed, for the object of it was the most difficult: that Jesus would achieve the greatest victory by means of the most complete immolation. This

faith was admirably illuminated by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which he possessed in a degree proportionate to his charity. The gift of intelligence made her penetrate and understand the revealed mysteries, their intimate meaning, their appropriateness, their harmony, their consequences; it made her see more clearly their credibility, particularly in those mysteries in which she participated more than any other, such as that of the virginal conception of Christ and that of the incarnation of the Son of God, and, as a consequence, in the mysteries of the Most Holy Trinity and of the economy of redemption. The gift of wisdom, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, made him judge of divine things by that sympathy or connaturality which is founded on charity5. Thus he knew, especially, how well these mysteries correspond to our highest aspirations, and always arouse new ones to attain them. She spent them in proportion to her charity, which never ceased to increase, her humility and her purity. In Mary the words: “God gives his grace to the humble” (Iac 4:6); “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Mt 5:8): they glimpse him already here on earth. The gift of knowledge, by a special instinct of the Holy Spirit, made him judge created things, either as symbols of divine things, in the sense that the heavens sing the glory of God, or to understand their nullity and fragility and better appreciate, by contrast, eternal life.

The religious who wants to be faithful to his vocation must live by faith, like the just man of whom Scripture speaks (cf. Hebr. 10:38). On many occasions-particularly in the practice of obedience and in the trials or nights of the soul to which God wills to subject him-he will have to close his eyes to simple natural reason, so weak and sickly, to open them only to the

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Cf. 2*2,45,2.

the ineffective light of faith. In these moments, it is necessary to look to Mary, whose heroic faith will point out to him the path he must follow in spite of all human views and appearances. This will give his actions an immense supernatural value, as it did to those of Mary, and at the same time will fill his soul with an imperturbable peace and happiness. St. Augustine dares to say that Mary was more blessed by receiving the faith of Christ than by conceiving him in her virginal womb 6. Hope

324. From a living faith, animated by charity, spontaneously springs a firm hope in the fulfillment of the divine promises and in the help needed to attain them. Let us listen again to the author cited above speaking of Mary’s hope 7: “The hope by which she aspired to possess God, whom she did not yet see, was a perfect confidence that rested, not in herself, but in divine mercy and in the omnipotence of his helpers. This foundation gave her a very sure certainty-“certainty of tendency,” says St. Thomas 8-■ which makes us think of that which the navigator has, after having taken the right course, of effectively heading toward the end of his voyage, and which increases as he draws nearer. In Mary this certainty was also increased by the inspirations of the gift of piety, by which, by arousing in us an entirely filial love for him, “the Holy Spirit bears witness to our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom. 8:16) and that we can count on his help. This certainty of hope was all the greater in Mary because she was confirmed in grace, preserved from every fault and, consequently, from every deviation, whether from presumption or from depression and

lack of trust in God. This perfect hope she exercised in her childhood when she sighed ardently for the coming of the Messiah, when she desired it for the salvation of the nations; when she hoped that the secret of the virginal conception of the Savior would be revealed to her husband Joseph; when she fled to Egypt; and later, on Calvary, when all seemed lost and she expected the complete and near victory of Christ over death, as He Himself had foretold. Her confidence, finally, encourages and sustains that of the apostles in the midst of their ceaseless struggles for the spread of the Gospel and for the conversion of the pagan world." .

The hope of the religious is also often put to a severe test. When, in spite of the zeal, interest and good will put into an apostolic work, everything ends, at least apparently, in the noisiest of failures; When those around him and perhaps his superiors themselves, far from encouraging him and -encouraging him, seem to contribute to increase his

"Beatíor ergo Marfa percipiendo fidem Christi, quam concipiendo carnem.

(St. Augustine, Liber ide saruta virginitate c.3 n.3: ML 40,398). 7 Garrigou-Lagrange, o.c. P.1Z6-127.

8 Cf. 2*2,18,4.

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When persecution and slander are heaped upon him; when heaven itself seems to be deaf to his cries and tears, the religious needs a superhuman hope in the mercy and help of

God in order not to lose heart. Like Abraham, he must “hope against hope” (cf. Rom 4:1,8), and he can only do this by looking to the one who not only knew how to practice this sublime virtue to an incomparable degree, but who is herself one of the firmest pillars of our Christian hope. The Church does not hesitate to proclaim this in one of the most beautiful antiphons of her liturgy: “Our life, our sweetness and our hope. Charity

325. Mary’s charity, in its threefold aspect of love of God, love of neighbor and love of self for God, is a sea without shores and a bottomless abyss. The queen of virtues should shine and did shine with divine radiance in the heart of the queen of heaven and earth. Her charity,” writes Fr. Garrigou 9, “her love of God for Himself and for souls. God for Himself and to souls for God, surpassed from the beginning the ultimate charity of all the saints put together, since it existed in the same degree as the fullness of grace. Mary was always intimately united to the Father, as a beloved daughter; to the Son, as a virgin mother closely united to his mission; and to the Holy Spirit, by a spiritual marriage that far surpassed that possessed by the greatest mystics. She was, to a degree impossible for us to suspect, the living temple of the Blessed Trinity. God loved her more than all other creatures put together, and Mary corresponded fully to this love, after having consecrated herself completely to Him from the first moment of her conception and living always in the most complete conformity of will with His good pleasure. No disordered passion, no vain restlessness, nor the slightest distraction came to retard this impulse of her love for God; her zeal for the regeneration of souls was proportionate to this impulse, and she offered herself and offered herself continually to her Son for our salvation. This charity in so eminent a degree she exercised in a continuous manner U but more especially when she consecrated herself totally to God, when she was presented in the temple and made the

vow of virginity, commending herself to Providence to be able to observe it faithfully; then, when at the annunciation she gave her consent with perfect conformity to the will of God and out of love for all the souls to be saved, she gave her consent with perfect conformity to the will of God and out of love for all the souls who were to be saved.

O.c. p.127. This is the profound theological reason for the incomparable charity of the Blessed Virgin, since, as St. Thomas explains, “the love of God creates and infuses goodness into the creatures* he loves (1:20,2); and therefore, by loving Mary with greater love than all other creatures put together, he infused in her, by that simple fact, greater treasures of charity and graces than in all other creatures put together, with the exception, of course, of the adorable humanity of Christ. (Author’s note.) 11 Many serious theologians affirm that not even during sleep was the Virgin’s actual charity interrupted, so that what we read of the bride in the Song of Songs was fulfilled in her to the letter: “I sleep, but my heart is awake” (Cant 5:2). St. Alphonsus of Liguori affirms this categorically, citing, among others, St. Ambrose, St. Rernardinus and Suarez (cf. The Glories of Mary p.2.* sec.3* § 2). (Author’s note.)

She was the same as when she conceived her Son and gave him life; when she presented him in the temple and later found him in the midst of the doctors, and when she offered him up, finally, on Calvary, participating in all his sufferings for the glory of God in a spirit of reparation and for the salvation of all. At the very moment when she heard the cries: “May his blood fall on us and on our children” (Mt 27:25), she joined in the Savior’s prayer for his

executioners: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Le 23:34). The Church also applies to her these words from Sirach (24:4): “I am the Mother of fair love, of the fear of God, of knowledge and of holy hope”.

The religious must also practice charity in its threefold aspect in preference to all the other virtues. It is the queen of all the virtues, the one that vivifies them all, raising them to a higher level and ordering them to the essential prize of eternal life I2; it is the magic wand that turns everything it touches into gold. Nothing is great before God without love, and nothing is small before Him if it is enlarged and vivified by an ardent charity. The love of God constitutes the greatest commandment of the law, and the second, similar to the first, is the love of neighbor. In these two commandments the whole law and the prophets are summed up and summarized (cf. Mt 22:37-40). The religious should frequently invoke Mary so that, as the universal Mediatrix of all graces, she may grant him, above all, the most perfect charity. A very beautiful formula for this is the following from St. Alphonsus Liguori 13: “O Mary, Queen of Love, the most lovable, the most beloved and the most loving of all creatures, as St. Francis de Sales called you; my Mother, you have always and completely burned with the love of God; deign, therefore, to communicate to me at least a little spark. You who prayed to your Son for the spouses who lacked wine, will you not pray for us, who lack divine love and are so obliged to love Him? Say, then, they have no love, and give it to us yourselves. (O Mother, by the love you have for Jesus, listen to us and pray for us. Amen”. b)

Cardinal virtues

As is well known, there are four cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance. They are called cardinal (from the Latin cardo cardinis, the corner of the door)

because the whole of human moral life revolves around them, as around corners. Prudence

326 Prudence is the first of the cardinal virtues and the one which, in a certain sense, governs and governs all the others, including the theological virtues. For this reason it is called auriga virtutum. Without 12 Cf. St. Thomas. In 1 ad Cor. lect.2. 13 Cf. The Glories of Mary p.2.a sec.3.8, § 2. It can be seen in The Ascetical Works of St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori vol.i (BAC, Madrid 1952) p.906.

no virtue can be perfect. She is in charge of telling us in each particular case what we should do or omit to do in order to attain eternal life 14. The Church invokes the Virgin Mary with the title of most prudent Virgin. She was, indeed, and to a sublime degree, not only in her works, but also in her silence and in her words. Let us listen to a pious author's exposition of this admirable prudence of the Virgin in its first two aspects:15 i.

Prudence in the works.

a) Before the birth of Jesus. Analyze a little some of the works of the Blessed Virgin and you will see what prudence you discover in all of them. Look at it in the concrete case of her vow of virginity. Humanly speaking, that was an imprudence, it was to break with a secular tradition in that town, it was to leave the common and ordinary way that all the Hebrew women followed. No one had done it yet, it was a completely unknown thing in the land. However, she did not act inconsiderately; with the very special light that God had communicated to her, she measured the excellence and the fruits of virginity, she penetrated the love that God has for

this virtue so much that he had already announced that for his Son he would choose a virgin mother, and after seeing and examining everything before God, slowly and calmly, trusting with certainty in the graces that God would give her for it, she did not doubt, nor hesitated, nor feared; With admirable firmness and decision, she departs from the common and general rule and makes her vow, still a child, to the Lord. b) At the Annunciation. She listens to the angel's praises, hears his ambassadorship, meditates and deepens in what is proposed to her, and with great serenity she decides. She is not blinded by the brightness of the crown of divine maternity, nor is she seduced by pretty or flattering words, nor does she cower before the sacrifices that she well saw would cost her acceptance; she does not rush forward, nor does she run hastily to admit what all the maidens were desiring. Any one of them would not have been able to contain herself with joy and gladness; she, however, sees the angel, hears him and above all is troubled; that is, she puts herself as if on guard and vigilant, as if she feared some temptation to her virtue, and when she realizes the importance of the embassy, she exposes her doubts, simply asks for explanations; and knowing clearly the will of the Lord, she consents with decision and security, giving herself to God as his handmaid. In this very thing, her prudence is admirable. She is already Mother of God, she is already Queen and Mistress. Nevertheless, she places herself in her place, in the only one she believes she should occupy; in that of the handmaids, without going ahead to ascend or to place herself in a higher place; she leaves that to God. How difficult it is to imitate this prudence, and yet how necessary it is! *c) During the life of Jesus. In both his private and public life, Mary always appears in her place, where God places her. How hidden, how recollected, how silent in the private life of Jesus! How well she knows how to adapt herself to the intimate and recollected character of this period of his life! And when Jesus goes out to preach, how far she is from*

meddling in the affairs of her Son! How gladly she would have accompanied him everywhere! 14 Cf. r-2,57,5; 64,4; 2-2,47,6-7. 15 Cf. Roorígue2 Villar, Points of Meditation on the Life and Virtues of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Valladolid 1943) p.2. medit.16-18.

What a joy to have witnessed all her miracles and prodigies! What a satisfaction to have heard all her preaching! What a consolation to have heard all the praises addressed to her Son! What a natural thing to have said to everyone on those occasions: “That is my Son”! But no, that was not the place that God’s will indicated to her; her place was in obscurity, it was her home; she was not called to preach to the crowds, that was not her vocation and her office. She gladly accepts those renunciations that the Lord imposes on her, she prudently hides herself and is hardly ever mentioned, as if in passing, in the Gospel, during this period of Christ’s life. And the same can be said when she emerges, because God commands it, from her obscurity, and appears beside her Son on Calvary, Look how she assists and what part she then takes in the passion of Christ. She suffers horribly, and yet she does not revolt angrily and furiously against those executioners, she does not utter desperate words, nor does she give piercing cries, nor does she take or adopt convulsive or exaggerated attitudes, nor, finally, does she expose herself imprudently to the wrath and insults of that infuriated mob. She is not to be shunned by the mob, but to witness the scene with the deepest pain in her heart, but in such a way as to pass unnoticed at the same time before the others. 2.°

Prudence in his silence.

It is well worthwhile, although we have already specified Mary’s prudence in some cases of her life, to pause to consider this same prudence in the ‘use she made of her tongue in particular, How prudent Mary was in her words! How very prudent in her silence! Admirable is the prudence of one who always speaks with opportunity and discretion, but no less so when he knows how to be silent; and sometimes how much more difficult it is to be silent than to speak in time! What a discreet reserve hers was, in the secret entrusted to her about the mystery of the encyclical! No one could suspect anything great or unusual in her. After the angel’s ambassadorship, they saw her as simple, as modest, as quiet as before. God took it upon himself to reveal her high dignity to St. Elizabeth, to Simeon, to the prophetess Anna. Let her say it and let God reveal it whenever He wills and to whomever He wills, but she will not discover His most lofty secret. Not once in her countenance, in her gestures, in her conduct, did she show in any way the least hint of the great event worked in her! How, then, could people guess it? How can we wonder at the doubts and hesitations of the Holy Patriarch if his wife kept silent, and to no one, not even to himself, did she communicate anything? Meditate on this astonishing step of Mary. She sees everything, she understands everything. St. Joseph sees that his thick virgin is going to be a mother, and he does not understand it. The Blessed Virgin penetrates into the heart of St. Joseph and witnesses his horrible sufferings. What confusion, what disorientation of his! She could fix everything with a single word: her most chaste spouse would believe her without hesitation. On the other hand, the angel did not forbid her from God to say it. It was not, therefore, in this case no imprudence to speak. By speaking, he would avoid very grave evils; St. Joseph was already planning to escape from that house and leave his wife, whom he did not understand. And, in spite of everything, she kept silent; she did not think she was authorized to

speak even then. She thinks it over, meditates on it before God, and decides to remain silent and to leave to God the unfolding of events as He wills. What heroic silence! What marvelous prudence that Mary teaches us by keeping silent!”

The Virgin Mary was also very prudent in her words. St. Bemardino of Siena, in a very beautiful sermon on the vision of the Virgin Mary, says that she was also very prudent in her words.

Seven times only, seven words full of admirable prudence and pondering, we read that the most blessed Mother of Christ spoke, as if to show mystically that she was full of the grace of the seventh heaven. With the angel alone she spoke twice. With Elizabeth, another two. With her Son, also twice: the first, in the temple; the second, at the wedding at Cana. With the ministers at the wedding, only once. And on all these occasions she always spoke very little, except when, in praise of God and in thanksgiving, she extended herself more widely when she said, “My soul magnifies the Lord,” in which words she spoke not to men, but to God. These seven words were uttered with admirable graduation and order, according to the process and acts of love, in the manner of seven flames from the furnace of his heart.”

As can be seen, the simple Christian, and especially the religious, cannot find a more gentle and effective way to perfect himself in the great virtue of prudence than by contemplating the Blessed Virgin and trying to imitate her most prudent conduct. Justice

337. Justice is that virtue which inclines man's will to give to each his due. Therefore it cannot be practiced in relation to oneself, but only in relation to others: justice always presupposes otherness. The Virgin practiced justice with God and with her neighbor to a heroic degree: a) With God, by practicing the divine law to the highest degree, especially by observing the legal precepts of the circumcision of Jesus and of her own purification, even though her divine Son was not subject to the first and she was not subject to the second. But, above all, in offering 'the sacrifice of Jesus* on the cross in her capacity as Coredemptrix to satisfy divine justice, she performed the most sublime, thrilling and heroic act ever performed by a pure creature before God. b) Towards her neighbor, she manifested herself in obedience and submission to St. Joseph, as head of the sacred family, even though Mary's dignity as Mother of God was incomparably superior to that of her virginal husband. In her dealings with her cousin St. Elizabeth and with the apostles after the Lord's ascension, Our Lady always appears giving to each one the treatment that corresponds to him, according to the most gentle and affectionate justice. The Holy Church rightly honors Mary 16 The paragraph we quote can be seen in the second nocturnal of the Office of the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (August 22).

with the title of "mirror of justice"-speculum iustitiae-which is not only perfectly true and valid in the biblical sense of the word-synonymous with holiness-but also refers to justice as a specific and cardinal virtue. Fortitude

328. Fortitude is a very important virtue in the spiritual life. Without it, no virtue can be sustained for a long time in the soul. Prudence-as we have seen-is the light and guide of the virtues, the practical norm of virtuous action; but fortitude is its support and support. The whole Christian life is a struggle against the enemies of the soul and the obstacles to virtue. It is necessary to overcome them, sometimes by attacking them head on, and at other times by resisting their violent attacks with energy. These are precisely the two acts proper to the virtue of fortitude: attacking and resisting. The Virgin Mary practiced Christian fortitude to such a sublime degree, especially during her frightful martyrdom at the foot of the cross of her divine Son, that she conquered the glorious title of Queen of Martyrs: Regina martyrum. Speaking of this fortitude of Mary, Rodriguez Villar i? writes: “What strong and extraordinary trials she had to go through! How she maintains, with admirable fortitude, her silence and how she goes through that humiliation; the humiliation and the hardest trial for a bride and for a virgin! 1 The journey to Bethlehem, all of it sown with scorn, discomfort, inconveniences and untold privations. The poverty of the cave, the circumstances of the birth of her Son, are more than enough to destroy any virtue that did not have Mary’s fortitude. Later, the circumcision. Witness the painful ceremony of tearing the tender and most delicate flesh of the Child, see his blood flow mixed with the tears that suffering and pain wrung from Jesus. Go through the trials of the purification, with the prophecy of Simeon, which already embittered his life forever; the loss of the Child and the dreadful suffering of those days, until he found Him; the anxieties and anguish of her heart throughout the public life of Christ, and, finally, look at Our Lady as the ideal image of fortitude at the foot of the cross, shaken by the fury of that storm of pain and suffering unleashed against her on Calvary, and yet, like the light of the lighthouse in the midst of the waves, without hesitation, without faltering, drinking,

serene, drop by drop, even to the dregs, that horrible and bitter chalice. Come very close to her, get in touch with her heart and ask her for that effort, that energy, that manly fortitude, to accept the trials that God sends you and even to desire them with holy illusion, because they will purify and purify you, giving a solid and positive value to your virtue". 17 O.c. p.393'394.

Temperance

329 Christian temperance is a supernatural virtue that moderates the inclination to sensible pleasures, especially those of touch and taste, restraining them within the limits of reason enlightened by faith. As derived virtues, abstinence, sobriety, chastity, meekness, gentleness, clemency, modesty and humility, among others, depend on it. The Virgin Mary practiced them all to a sublime and heroic degree, as no other pure creature has ever practiced them. Referring specifically to temperance in eating, the author cited l8 writes: "Enter the house of Nazareth and see the Blessed Virgin preparing and seasoning the food of that little house. The main seasoning is poverty and frugality, and above all the affection and love with which the Virgin prepares and serves everything. Contemplate that little house and the utensils they use; all very clean, but all very poor. (What postures, what attitudes, what manners so simply correct! What virtue of temperance so divinely practiced in the house of Nazareth! Tell Our Lady to teach it to you and to remember it when you sit at table, when you are served something that you do not like, so that you may overcome and take it; or when, on the contrary, it is something that pleases you very much, so that you may

restrain yourself and not overdo it. (May you remember, with the presence of the Blessed Virgin, to supernaturalize and give a great value to this act so wretched and miserable as that of eating! Finally, may you never get up from the table without having made some mortification in honor of your dear Mother”.

As for the virtues derived from temperance, it would be easy to give examples of how they were practiced by the Virgin Mary, whose immaculate heart was the richest reliquary of all the Christian virtues. Because of their special importance, we will speak of some of them below. c)

Religious virtues

We qualify as such those referring to the three vows that constitute the very essence of the religious state as such: poverty, chastity and obedience. All three were practiced to a sublime degree by the Virgin Mary, as we will see below. Poverty

330 Poverty, as a Christian virtue, does not consist in not possessing the things of this world, but in having the heart perfectly detached from them, even if they are possessed. Without em18 Rodríguez Villar, o.c. p.397.

However, material poverty helps the virtuous very much, if one knows how to bear it according to God’s designs; it is easier not to cling to things when one does not have them than to detach oneself affectively from them when one possesses them. Let us listen to St. Alphonsus Liguori speaking of Mary’s poverty: “Our loving Redeemer, in order to teach us to despise the goods of the world, wished to be poor on earth: ‘For your sake,’ says St. Paul, ‘though he was rich, he became poor, so that you through his poverty might

become rich'" (2 Cor. 8:9). Jesus Christ exhorted those who wanted to follow him: "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor…, and when you come back, follow me" (Mt 19:21), Mary was the most perfect disciple and the one who best followed his example. St. Peter Canisius proves that the Blessed Virgin, with the inheritance of her parents, could have lived comfortably; but she preferred to remain poor, keeping only what was necessary, to distribute the rest in alms to the poor in the temple. There are many authors who defend that Mary even made a vow of poverty, as can be deduced from what she herself revealed to St. Bridget: "From my childhood I made a vow in my heart not to possess anything in the world". The gifts received from the holy Magi must not have been of little value, but she distributed them all among the poor, as St. Bernard testifies.… That the Mother of God had distributed the aforementioned gifts at once, is deduced from the fact that, as time went by, she did not offer the lamb, which was the offering of the well-to-do, as we read in Leviticus (12:6), but two turtledoves or two young pigeons, as the poor were accustomed to offer (Le 2:24). Mary Most Holy told St. Bridget: "All that I could have I gave to the poor, and I reserved for myself only what was necessary to eat and clothe the poor2a". For love of poverty, she did not disdain to marry St. Joseph, a poor artisan, supporting herself with the work of her hands, spinning and sewing, as St. Bonaventure testifies. The angel revealed to St. Bridget, with regard to Mary, that worldly riches were as vile to her as the dust that is trodden on. In short: she always lived poor and died poor…"

Although some of the traits described by the great lover of Mary cannot be demonstrated according to the demands of modern criticism, it is evident that the poverty of the Blessed Virgin must have been extreme from the data provided by the Gospel: the offering of the two turtledoves

(Le 2:24), the officiousness of St. Joseph (Mt 13:55) and of Jesus himself (Me 6:3), *etc.* Of course, the religious will never have to endure a greater poverty than that which Mary experienced in the portal of Bethlehem, during the exile to Egypt and in other circumstances of her life as a poor villager, the wife of a poor carpenter.... Cf, The Dorias of Mary p.z * sec.3.4 § 7-In the edition of the Saint's works published by the BAC, t.i P.91S.

Chastity

331. Mary's chastity was so angelic and superhuman that, properly speaking, one cannot attribute to her the virtue of chastity-which etymologically comes from the punishment of a rebellious flesh20 -but rather that of purity in its most sublime and exalted degree, 2K It is a dogma of faith, expressly defined by the Church, that the Virgin Mary remained an intact virgin before, at and after the birth of Jesus 22 Therefore, to designate her unmistakably by her own name, it is sufficient to say: The Virgin, without needing to add anything else. She was, in fact, the Virgin par excellence. Let us listen again to St. Alphonsus Liguori 23: "After the fall of Adam, the virtue of chastity is the most difficult to practice, because of the rebellion of the senses against reason. Among all the battles that man has to fight," says St. Augustine, "the bloodiest are the battles of chastity, because the battle is daily and victories are rare. But always blessed and praised be the Lord, who has left us in Mary a perfect model of this virtue. Mary is rightly called the Virgin of virgins," says St. Albert the Great, "because she was the first who, without advice or example from anyone, made to God an offering of her virginity, giving to all an example of

virginal purity, as David had prophesied (cf. Ps 44:14-16). She made a profession of virginity without advice and without example, and so St. Bernard asks her: “Who taught you to please God with virginity and to live an angelic life on earth?” “It was Jesus Christ himself,” replies Sophronius, “who chose this most pure virgin as his mother to present to the whole world the example of chastity”. Because of this purity, the Holy Spirit called the Virgin “beautiful as a turtledove” (Song 1:9)…. Because of her purity she was also called a lily: “As a lily among the thorns, so is my beloved among the maidens” (Cant 2:2). Dionysius Carthusianus warns that she was called a lily among thorns, because all the other virgins were thorns for themselves or for others, while the Blessed Virgin was not a thorn for herself or for others. Just by letting herself be seen, she instilled in everyone pure thoughts and affections; and St. Thomas confirms this with these words: “The beauty of the Blessed Virgin invited all those who looked at her to the practice of chastity”. St. Jerome assures us that he is certain that St. Joseph always remained a virgin, due to the company of Mary…. One author says that the Blessed Virgin was such a lover of this virtue that, in exchange for preserving it, she would have been ready to renounce even the dignity of the Mother of God. This is based on Mary’s answer to the archangel: “How can this be, since I do not know man? (Le 1:34), and in the words with which she ended, “Let it be done to me according to your word” (Le 1:38), signifying thereby that she gave her consent supported by the words of the angel, who had assured her that she would be a mother by the work of the Holy Spirit alone.” 20 Gf. .2-2,151,1, 21 Cf. 2-2,152,5. 22 This was defined by the Lateran Council (649) against the Inonoteletas (cf. D 256). It was repeated by various councils, among them that of Trent (cf. D 993). 23 L.c. § 6. In the edition of the BAC, p.914-915V’tda religiosa

Iva obedience

332. Obedience is a virtue derived from justice through observance, because there is nothing more just and obligatory than to obey a superior24. It is the virtue that puts.promptness in the will to obey the precepts of the superior. The Virgin Mary was also a model of obedience. Not only did she faithfully fulfill the internal inspirations of the Holy Spirit (e.g., by inspiring in her the vow of virginity, unprecedented in the Jewish environment), but she always obeyed the orders of her virginal spouse St. Joseph, in spite of being very inferior to her because of her incomparable dignity as Mother of God. She also obeyed the order of the Roman emperor, directing him to Bethlehem, despite the long journey (about 150 kilometers by the present road) and the great discomfort due to the delicate state of her condition. He accepted without reply, as coming from God's hands, the humiliations of Bethlehem, the poverty of the stable, the shock of the flight into Egypt, *etc.* But where her obedience reached its peak was in the sacrifice of Calvary, accepting, at the side of her crucified Son, her terrible mission as Coredemptrix of humanity and Queen and Sovereign of the martyrs. Speaking of Mary's obedience to her virginal spouse St. Joseph, Rodriguez Villar25 rightly writes: "In spite of all her magnificent excellencies and her rich fruits, what should most encourage you to love obedience and to practice it is the example of the Blessed Virgin. What a model of obedience hers is! She always obeyed with yieldingness of judgment, joy of heart and promptness in execution. Look at her ordinary, continuous obedience to St. Joseph, whom she sees as the head of that house and the direct representative of God's authority. She

does not dispute his orders, does not contradict his indications, does not follow other counsels and orientations, even in the smallest things, but those that he gives her. It would be better to say that she never considered as small things those that obedience commanded. Hence her total and complete submission to the divine will, even when manifested by a superior who in many respects was inferior to her. Nevertheless, she obeys as a slave, she is always the “slave of the Lord” and of his representatives, she has no freedom, no will, no opinion of her own, she has no right to think or to judge, much less to criticize and censure what she is commanded to do by God; If she were to do so, she would cease to be the “slave”, for she has lost all her personality, and Mary loves this title so much that she has made it the program of her life; she has freely, spontaneously and generously renounced all her rights, all her freedom, in order to become totally enslaved to God. Whoever has made a vow of obedience, see what she has bound herself to. This is the model. There is no other way to fulfill it than to be and to live totally enslaved in his freedom, in his will, in his very mind, to that of the 24 Cf. 2-2:80; 102; 104. 25 o.c. p.422-423.

In imitation of Mary, he cannot stop to examine the reasons or motives for what he is commanded; he must only know whether it is commanded or not, and act in accordance with it, without delay of any kind. Those who do not have this vow, let them also see where the ideal of this virtue is, and compare their conduct with that of the Blessed Virgin, Make a very careful examination of this point, analyze well your obedience, put it in comparison with that of Mary and deduce from here the consequence of what you have to do”.

333 Such are the principal Christian virtues practiced by the Blessed Virgin, which make her immaculate heart the most complete and perfect model of holiness that can be imagined in a pure creature. We have recalled only some of the most important ones, but we have said nothing of all the others, which were also practiced by her to an incomparable degree of perfection and completion. Let us remember at least in a simple statement: a) The very deep religiosity with which she went to the temple since she was a little girl to practice the worship of God even in its smallest details. b) Her spirit of prayer and recollection in Bethlehem, Nazareth, Egypt… c) The piety, full of filial tenderness, with which she loved God, her parents, St. Joachim and St. Anne, and her own earthly homeland, fulfilling all the legal prescriptions. d) Her profound gratitude for the benefits received from God, as was seen in the sublime song of the Magnificat. e) Her exquisite courtesy and delicacy, manifested in the visit to her cousin St. Elizabeth. f) Her magnanimity or greatness of soul, forgiving the executioners who crucified her divine Son and offering for them her dreadful martyrdom at the foot of the cross. g) Her patience and long-suffering, enduring so heroically the great privations and sufferings to which God wanted to subject her during her whole mortal life. h) And, above all, her most profound humility, which made her consider herself a poor handmaid of the Lord at the very moment when the angel announced her exaltation to the incomprehensible dignity of Mother of God (cf. Le 1:38). Truly, the Virgin Mary is the Mirror of Justice, the ultimate model of all perfection and holiness, the exemplar and prototype of all the Christian virtues. The religious who wants to climb to the summit of holiness has only to contemplate Mary and try to reproduce in his soul the features of her supernatural physiognomy: “Look, and do according to the model that has been shown to you” (Ex 25:40).

P.lll. As pee/o ase ethical-mystical of religious life.

Chapter 15

THE SCIENCE OF THE RELIGIOUS Although the subject that we deal with in this chapter is of primary and very special interest to the religious priest, in view of the exercise of his apostolic ministry - preaching, confessional, *etc.* -, it also affects in a direct and immediate way the religious men and women dedicated to teaching, and in a certain way to the simple brothers or sisters of obedience, without being able to ignore the nuns themselves who live in rigorous enclosure, without any contact with the outside world. We will expose the following points: i.°.

Necessity of sacred science in the religious,

2.0

How to study and live the sacred science.

t.

Necessity of sacred science in religious people

334. In his magnificent encyclical Ad catholici sacerdotii, the immortal pontiff Pius XI devoted some admirable paragraphs to the knowledge which every minister of the Lord should possess. Although addressed, naturally, to priests-religious or secular-his luminous orientations can also be of benefit to non-priestly religious and to religious women themselves, especially if they are dedicated to the teaching and education of youth. Six are the principal teachings of Pius XI with regard to the question that concerns us: 1. a

The priest must be a true teacher.

2. a

He must have extensive theological knowledge.

3. a

He must continue studying throughout his life.

4. a

He/she must have a broad general knowledge.

5. a

If possible, grow a specialty crop.

6. a

Ordinarily, holiness without knowledge is not enough.

We will comment briefly on these six points, placing the corresponding pontifical text at the front of each commentary, 1 Pius XI, encyclical Ad catholici sacerdotii, December 1935, no. 44-47, in the Collection of Encyclicals published by Spanish Catholic Action.

The priest must be a true teacher

335* “The image of the Catholic priest that we are trying to make fully enlightened for the whole world to see would be incomplete if we did not emphasize another very important requirement that the Church demands of him: knowledge. The Catholic priest is constituted “teacher in Israel” (cf. Lo 3:10) because he has received from Christ the office and

mission of teaching the truth: “Teach all nations” (Mt 28:19). He is obliged to teach the doctrine of salvation; and of this teaching, in imitation of the Apostle of the Gentiles, he is indebted “to the wise and to the unlearned” (Rom 1:14). And how can he teach it if he does not know it? “In the lips of the priest must be the deposit of knowledge, and from his mouth the law must be learned,” says the Holy Spirit through Malachi (Mal 2:7). But no one could say, in order to emphasize the necessity of priestly knowledge, stronger words than those that the same divine Wisdom once pronounced through the mouth of Hosea: “Because you have rejected knowledge, I will reject you, so that you will not exercise my priesthood” (Hos 4:6).

As can be seen, the Pope uses three decisive arguments to urge the priest to possess the required knowledge: a) The Church demands it of him. Elsewhere in this work we have collected the canonical legislation relative to the scientific formation of religious and the very wise norms of Pius XII in his apostolic constitution Sedes sapientiae (cf. n. 84). Canon 974 indicates among the requisites for licit priestly ordination that the candidate possess “due knowledge”. b) God himself demands it of him, to the point of threatening to exclude him from the priesthood if he does not (text of Hosea). c) His own ministry demands it of him, as “teacher of Israel”, who must teach the doctrine of salvation “to all nations”, without distinction between “the wise and the ignorant”.

Nothing can be added to these strong and decisive reasons.
2.0

Must have extensive theological knowledge

336. “The priest must have a full knowledge of the doctrine of the faith and of Catholic morals; he must know how to

teach it and give an account of the dogmas, laws, and worship of the Church, whose minister he is; he must dispel the darkness of ignorance which, in spite of the progress of profane science, envelops so many of the minds of our day in matters of religion. Never has the saying of Tertullian been so much in its place as now: “The truth does not pretend at times but that it is not condemned by not knowing it” It is also the duty of the priest to clear the understandings of the errors and prejudices heaped upon them by the hatred of adversaries. To the modern soul, which eagerly goes in search of the truth, he must know it 2 Tertullian, Apolog. cu.

He must demonstrate with serene frankness; to the hesitant, shaken by doubt, he must instill encouragement and confidence, guiding them with imperturbable firmness to the safe harbor of faith, with full conviction and firm adherence embraced; to the attacks of error, stubborn and obstinate, he must know how to make courageous and vigorous resistance, at the same time serene and well founded”.

In these paragraphs, the Pope sets forth the vast panorama that the priest’s theological knowledge must encompass. He must know, with the greatest possible breadth and depth, the following subjects, which he must know how to present to the faithful: a) Sacred Scripture. Happily, we are witnessing a true biblical renaissance, from which we can expect excellent fruits among the Christian people. The editions of Sacred Scripture are multiplying prodigiously in all the languages of the world, and there is hardly a moderately educated Christian who does not possess his Bible or, at least, the New Testament. But often the reading

of the inspired pages raises in their spirit doubts and anxieties which the priest must dispel by explaining to them the right interpretation of the obscure and difficult passages, segdn the mind of the holy Church, which has received from God the charge of guarding and authentically interpreting the sacred treasure of the divine Scriptures* Rightly does Pius XII write in his admirable encyclical Divino afflante Spiritu 3: “Let priests, to whom is entrusted the care of the eternal salvation of the faithful, after they have diligently searched the sacred pages and made them their own by prayer and meditation, carefully expound these sovereign riches of the divine word in sermons, homilies and exhortations; let them also confirm Christian doctrine with sentences taken from the sacred books, illustrate it with enlightened examples from sacred history, and nominally from the Gospel ofChrist Our Lord; And all this-avoiding with care and diligence those accommodations proper to individual whim and taken from things very foreign to the case, which is not the use, but the abuse of the divine word-let them expound it so eloquently, so distinctly and clearly, that the faithful may not only be moved and inflamed to put their lives in good order, but may also conceive in their minds the utmost veneration for Holy Scripture “*.

It is a pity, as well as a scandal, to hear so many sermons overloaded with philosophy, literature and profane history, in which scriptural quotations and biblical examples are conspicuous by their absence, even though nothing can compare to them in beauty, poetry and sanctifying efficacy. But the priest who does not read it and meditate on it day and day will not be able to preach Scripture. 3 Pius XII, encyclical Divino afilante Spiritu, in Documentos bíblicos (BAC, Madrid 1955) p.553 n.651.

C.15. The science of the religious

night, making it his bedside book and carrying it as a true treasure in the depths of his apostolic heart.4 b) Dogmatic and moral theology* It is impossible to carry out the difficult apostolate of the word with guaranteed success without a good theological preparation, both dogmatic and moral. Not all dogmatic questions have the same practical importance, nor do they lend themselves in the same way to immediate use in the apostolate of the word; but none of them should be ignored by the priest or religious apostle. An essential feature would be missing from the overall picture, which would blur its exact physiognomy; a screw in the apostle’s intellectual machinery, which would impede its perfect functioning. In practice, however, in the exercise of the apostolate, it is necessary to know how to select the most important and profitable subjects. Vaca5 writes in this regard, “If we focus on the dogmatic field, there is no doubt that certain questions stand out among all the others, in order to give the interior life of souls a firm doctrinal basis, which so often fails, leaving too much room for sentimentalism. These themes are: God, Jesus Christ, grace, the Church. It will be said to me that this is the whole of theology. Exactly so. All theology has to be taught, but knowing how to center it on very few themes, so that souls learn to simplify and unify, to synthesize all their religious knowledge, keeping them away from this dispersion in small details with no connection, which never manage to be shaped in a strong and finished scheme of doctrine. God is little known, even by the so-called pious souls, who assiduously practice the sacraments. Many anthropomorphic ideas are mixed with the pure concept that faith gives us; at other times, God is a mere theory of a reality far from life and the immediate interests of souls. God, the supreme and infinite Being, whose attributes summarize all the perfections imaginable: goodness, power, mercy, justice,

holiness, beauty, truth and love; and all forming one single thing, without divisions or limits, wonderfully attractive and lovable, precisely when He is looked upon as incomprehensible, when the soul feels unable to embrace Him and has to humble itself reverently before such greatness, leaving itself entrusted into His hands; God, who draws near and accompanies us continually in the richness of His Trinity, leaving an imprint on the soul by each of His divine persons: Of power, redemption and sanctification, I say, is little known and less meditated upon by souls. We speak too little of God. Jesus Christ, God and man, Only-begotten of the Father and our brother, is not well known to us either. Either his human concept is full of sentimentalism, or he is distanced from our daily life. I think I have already said it: we do not realize to what extent we read the Gospel "in the color of our glass", disfiguring it with our judgments and concerns, without knowing how to strip ourselves of ourselves, in order to find Jesus there, the authentic Jesus portrayed by the evangelists and that only the saints have known how to see him as he is. Grace, as a living and life-giving reality of our soul, and the Church, 4 We recommend on this subject the precious book of Cardinal Gomá La Biblia y la preicación (Barcelona 1927)* 5 César Vaca, O. S. A., Guías de almas 2.* ed. (Avila 1949) c.13 P.201-2D3.

as the mystical Body of Christ, as a society united by the Holy Spirit, are not firm convictions, truths that stimulate action, nourish love, maintain hope and give encouragement to bear pain and embrace sacrifice.... < This must not be. It is necessary to adopt a more constructive posture, to spend less time in attacking errors or customs and to begin to fill the souls with truth, goodness and

holiness. The errors and vices then dissipate, as the fog vanishes before the powerful rays of the sun. It is much sooner possible to lead a soul away from the world and from sin by presenting it with the beauties of a holy life than by showing it the ugliness of a sinful life, because the soul that does not know God is not capable of seeing the ugliness of sin either. How many times, before the simple and clear exposition of the supernatural life, souls are astonished, as if they were then discovering a world of marvels ignored until then! If we pass from the dogmatic to the moral, we must also say that the guide of souls, who is a confessor, must have this knowledge always fresh, without being deceived by the sophism - already refuted by St. Alphonsus - that experience makes up for the defects of study. But there are topics of the utmost topicality that souls bring every day for consultation and of which it is necessary to know very thoroughly the sentences, the orientations of the Church, the latest opinions of the authors. Questions of justice, of married life, of purity, as these problems are posed by current customs and currents. It is necessary to study, to know a lot, to think things over, to consult, because the books do not go into detail and it is necessary to apply the principles well, not to forget any of them, so as not to fall neither into a cruel rigorism that despairs souls nor into tolerances that facilitate the path of sin".

c) The laws of the Church. It is fundamental to have an up-to-date knowledge of the laws of the Church, contained principally in the Canonical Code and in the dispositions that emanate continually from the Holy See through the Sacred Congregations and other Roman dicasteries. It is not licit to improvise or to let oneself be carried away by one's own taste or whim in what concerns the liturgy, divine worship, the administration of the sacraments, etc., and in all those things on which the Church has already given concrete and precise norms. In these times of renewal-the

Church herself is renewing herself in the most wise dispositions of the Second Vatican Council-there is a danger of being carried away by one's own impetus or enthusiasm in introducing on one's own account novelties not foreseen or ordained by the Church. Pope Paul VI has repeatedly warned against these capricious innovations, imposed by mere private individuals. It must be the Church herself who takes the initiative and gives the concrete norms for their application in practice, and all this presupposes, on the part of the priest, the religious or the simple faithful, a clear knowledge of those norms and a perfect docility to put them into practice in the manner disposed and willed by the Church.

d) Asceticism and mysticism. Unfortunately, not all priests and religious have a perfect formation in this most important branch of sacred science, which has such a profound effect on their own spiritual life and that of others. The mystery of grace, the marvelous laws of its growth and development, the workings of the infused virtues and of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the nature of Christian perfection, the nights and trials of the soul, the degrees of prayer, mystical union with God, and a thousand other aspects of the Christian life from its beginnings to its full development at the summit of holiness, should be familiar to all priests and religious, not only to directors of souls. Undoubtedly, the fact that so few Christians seriously aspire to holiness within their own state is due in no small part to the lack of suitable guides in the ways of the spirit. St. John of the Cross deeply regrets this fact-already common in his time-and threatens with God's punishment the incompetent priest who, for lack of due preparation, disorients souls or does not help them and

pushes them toward the heights of full Christian perfection. “These do not know what a spirit is. They do God great injury and disrespect by putting their coarse hand where God works, because it has cost God much to bring these souls this far, and He is very proud to have brought them to this solitude and emptiness.... And so, he who rashly errs, being obliged to get it right, as every one is in his office, will not go unpunished, according to the harm he has done. For the affairs of God must be dealt with very carefully and with eyes wide open, especially in cases of such importance and in such high business as that of these souls, where there is almost infinite gain in getting it right and almost infinite loss in erring” 6.

e) Pastoral theology. It is that part of theology that teaches the ministers of the Church how to conduct themselves in the treatment and direction of the souls entrusted to them by God. It is an eminently practical science, which in recent times has experienced a great enrichment with a multitude of data from depth psychology and related sciences. Having pointed out the main subjects to be covered by the science of the priest or religious apostle, let us continue examining the text of Pius XI in the above-mentioned encyclical, 3.0

He must continue studying throughout his life

337.

“It is necessary, therefore, venerable brethren, that the priest, even when he is already engrossed in the burdensome occupations of his holy ministry, 6 St. John of the Cross,

Uama de amor viva c.3 u.54 and 56.

to continue in the serious and profound study of theological subjects, increasing from day to day the sufficient supply of knowledge, made in the seminary, with new treasures of sacred erudition that will enable him more and more for preaching and for the direction of souls".

The Pope is well aware and fully realizes that the priestly ministry often involves "burdensome occupations. In spite of this, he insists on the need to continue the study of sacred science throughout his life, not only so as not to forget what he has already learned, but also to increase his store of knowledge and "keep up to date" in a multitude of matters that are rapidly aging with the rhythm of new times and new circumstances. The priest who does not study - taking time from wherever he can find it - fails in one of his most serious duties and will soon experience in his life the sad consequences of his guilty negligence, 4.0

Must have a broad general knowledge

338.

He must, moreover," continues Pius XI, "for the decorum of the ministry he carries out, and in order to gain, as is fitting, the confidence and esteem of the people, which are so useful for the greater performance of his pastoral work, possess that wealth of knowledge, not exactly sacred, which is the common patrimony of the educated people of the age; that is to say, he must be a modern man, in the good sense of the word, as is the Church, which extends to all times, to all countries. And to all of them it accommodates itself; that it blesses and encourages all healthy initiatives and does not fear the advances, even the most daring ones, of science, of true science. In every age the Catholic clergy has

cultivated with advantage every field of human knowledge; and in some centuries it was so much at the head of the scientific movement that clergyman was synonymous with learned. The Church herself, after having preserved and saved the treasures of ancient culture, which thanks to her and her monasteries have not almost completely disappeared, has shown in her most distinguished doctors how all human knowledge can contribute to the enlightenment and defense of the Catholic faith. Of which We Ourselves have, a short time ago, presented to the world a luminous example, placing the nimbus of the saints and the halo of the doctors on the forehead of that great master, of the unsurpassable master Thomas Aquinas, of that Albertus Teutonicus, whom his contemporaries already honored with the nickname of Magus and universal Doctor".

It is already understood that the head of the priest or religious apostle cannot become a universal encyclopedia or a storehouse of all possible knowledge, sacred and profane. This is not the mind of the Pope. But that store of profane knowledge which constitutes the common patrimony of every moderately cultured person cannot be lacking in the priest of Christ without his sacred ministry suffering a serious detriment on many occasions. No one can demand of him the knowledge proper to a true technician, outside of

But he must be able to alternate and give his opinion on all those scientific questions which constitute the principal common concerns of the learned people with whom he lives, and he must know how to relate them to the great truths revealed by God, pointing out the admirable harmony and

harmony that must always exist, necessarily, between true science and faith. S.°

If possible, grow a specialty crop

339- “It is true that, in our days, one cannot ask of the clergy such primacy in all fields of knowledge. The scientific patrimony of mankind today is so vast that no man is capable of embracing it all, much less of excelling in each of its innumerable branches. However, if, on the one hand, it is prudent to encourage and help those members of the clergy who, out of a special aptitude, feel moved to study this or that art or science, not unworthy of their ecclesiastical character, because all this, within its just limits and under the direction of the Church, redounds to the honor of the Church herself and to the glory of her divine Head, Jesus Christ, on the other hand, the rest of the clergy should be encouraged to study this or that art or science; On the other hand, the other clerics must not be content with what was perhaps sufficient in former times, but they must be in a position to acquire, or rather, they must in fact have a more extensive and complete general culture, corresponding to the higher level and the greater breadth that, generally speaking, modern culture has reached compared to that of past centuries.

The Pope expressly warns that the specialty to which those who are uniquely gifted and have a vocation for it dedicate themselves must not be “unworthy of their ecclesiastical character”. There are, in fact, many “specialties” which, without being expressly bad or unseemly, are not in keeping with the ecclesiastical character and the sovereign transcendence of their sacred ministry. There is no need to give examples, which could be given in abundance. Since the glory of God and the tremendous business of the salvation of souls are at stake, the priest or religious apostle

cannot waste his time in frivolities and trifles proper to idle and unoccupied people. Superiors are gravely obliged to watch over their subjects on this point and to cut off abuses energetically and unceremoniously. 6°

Ordinarily, holiness without knowledge is not enough.

340. “It is true that, in some cases, the Lord, ‘who plays with the universe’ (Prov 8:31), wished in times very close to our own to raise to priestly dignity and to do prodigious good for men who were almost completely devoid of that wealth of doctrine of which we are speaking. But this was to teach everyone to esteem holiness more highly than knowledge and not to place greater trust in human means than in divine ones; in other words, it was because the world needed to have this saving practical lesson repeated from time to time in its ears: “God has chosen the foolish according to the world, to confound the wise..., so that they may be more wise...”.

Let no mortal man boast of his obedience” (I Cor 1:27-29). Thus, as in the natural order, with miracles, the effect of the physical laws is suspended for a moment, without being abrogated, so these men, true living miracles in whom the loftiness of sanctity surpassed everything else, in no way disprove the truth and necessity of what we have seen recommended”.

The Pope clearly alludes to the holy Curé of Ars, St. John Baptist Vianney, who, in spite of his deficient theological preparation, carried out with his exemplary holiness a truly impressive apostolic work from his small village. But the exception confirms the rule. If any priest were able to reach

the sublime evangelical perfection of the holy Curé of Ars, he could afford the luxury of not possessing great and profound theological knowledge: his holiness would more than make up for it, giving him an apostolic ardor and fire capable of melting marble; but, unfortunately, the great saints will always constitute an exception, even among persons professionally consecrated to God. In the case of a mediocre Christian life-which, unfortunately, is the most common and normal even among the Lord's chosen ones-there is no choice but to make up in part for this great failure by increasing the other elements available to the apostle for the exercise and fulfillment of his mission, among which theological and scientific preparation, in accordance with the demands of modern times, occupies a prominent place. Holiness can work wonders even without science; but the lack of both will always be irremediably condemned to the most resounding and total failure. 2,

How to study and live the sacred science

341. Having specified the indispensable necessity of sacred knowledge for the priest or religious apostle, let us now see how he should study and live it. This is a very interesting matter, since it is not enough to possess sacred knowledge coldly; it is necessary to make it one's own flesh and life if we want to obtain the maximum benefit from it in order to sanctify ourselves and others. Rather than a broad and detailed exposition, which would exceed the framework of our work and the space devoted to this chapter, we will present our thought in an almost schematic form and as a theme for meditation.

a) Introduction

In trying to investigate the causes of the obvious fact of the de-Christianization of the masses, the accusation has been made that one of the main causes is due to the lack of holiness and intellectual preparation of the clergy. The latter - the lack of intellectual preparation - is attributed on a large scale to the fact that the clergy do not study and live theology in the way they should. And this for two main reasons: a) Because in the seminary or house of studies there was no awareness of this life. b) Because the professors did not know how to awaken it among their students, young and inexperienced. It is very urgent to remedy this unfortunate state of affairs. b) It is possible to study theology in a life plan.

1. well:

It must be assumed that it is not possible to do so.

a) . Without having previously known the value and place that sacred science occupies in the life of the priest or religious apostle. Whoever is unaware of the imperative need and the insurmountable value of theological studies, cannot live them properly. Theology is not an intellectual curiosity; it is a true wellspring of life. b) Without having tried to theologize our Christian life, that is, without having ordered our theological studies to increase our supernatural life. c) If in trying to study it we seek ourselves, instead of seeking God. There are many ways to seek oneself: to obtain a brilliant grade in exams, to stand out from others, to prepare for a future professorship or canonry….

2. But it is perfectly possible to study theology as a plan of life: a) If the professors were perfectly aware that the chair of theology is a true chair of the Holy Spirit, which obliges

them to be full-bodied theologians: theoretical and practical at the same time. If in teaching theology they would put all their soul and enthusiasm into it; if they would teach by pleasing and persuading; if they would show the practical and pastoral derivations of the theoretical and speculative principles; if they would make the students see how Christian spirituality has to derive from and be supported by the great dogmatic truths in order to be truly solid and constructive. b) If the students would make use of the principles and practical norms that every intellectual vocation postulates; if they would use all the natural and supernatural means to convert science into life and study into prayer. We are going to talk about them below.

Do I have to study theology as a life plan?

1. In the purely psychological and natural order, the following 7: a) The student is consecrated. He must think with his whole being: with his head and his heart. “He must give himself with his whole soul so that the truth may also give itself. Truth serves only its ‘slaves’” (Fr. Sertillanges). b) The intellectual vocation implies a serious resolution. The life of study imposes profound abnegations. c) An intellectual vocation is not satisfied with vague readings and small scattered works. It is a matter of penetration and continuity, of methodical and organized effort. “Genius is a long patience”, but organized and intelligent* d) Laziness, sensuality, pride, envy and other vices are enemies of science. It is necessary to practice the opposite virtues, even in the purely human and intellectual order. Moral rectitude and peace of mind-which is their immediate consequence1- are absolutely indispensable to obtain the maximum

intellectual performance. e) The student should remember the very wise advice of St. Thomas Aquinas to his disciple Friar John on the way to study: -Do not throw yourself suddenly into the sea, but try to enter it by the streams (that is, go from the easy to the difficult). -Be slow to speak. -Love the purity of conscience. -Do not fail to devote some time to prayer. -Love solitude and retreat. -Be affable with everyone. -Above all, flee from dissipation. -Fix in your memory everything good that you hear, without paying attention to who says it. -Try to understand all the things you read and hear. -Do not try to investigate what is beyond your reach.

2. In the supernatural order and taking into account that theology is the science of God and its study must be oriented to one's own salvation and that of others, the religious who wants to live theology will take into account the following: a) Before the study he will rectify his intention to do it exclusively for and for the glory of God, Four are the supernatural virtues that must influence his intellectual work so that it may be fully sanctified:

7 Cf. Sertillanges, O. P., La vida intelectual (Barcelona 1944); a precious little work that should be read and meditated upon by all students, because it is extraordinarily formative.

i) studiousness, an elicitive virtue of the very act of study ^ 2) religion, offering to God the intellectual effort as a sacrifice that ascends to Him in the odor of sweetness; 3) obedience, studying as a professional duty of state; 4) charity, above all, which must govern the intellectual act by turning it into love.

b)

During the study it has to do so;

Digne: so that study may be pleasing to God in the presence of the angels. Attente: to put the five senses in an intense and constant work. Devote: so that the coldness of concepts may be transformed by love into a burning thirst for Christ.

c)

After the study, he should devote himself to prayer.

Let prayer prepare for study, and study for prayer. They are two distinct realities (unfortunately, let us not confuse things by believing that supernaturalized study is already prayer: it is not), but they must be inseparably united. Let us never separate them. Let us meditate slowly before the Tabernacle on the great themes that have been the object of our study. Not in order to continue our intellectual work there (a great error and lamentable waste of time!), but so that these great truths may descend into the heart and come to life in it. Only a consecrated spirit, moved by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, will be able to taste and savor the supernatural truths. But these gifts do not fully exercise their activity except in souls very faithful to grace and quite advanced in the spiritual life. If we are faithful to his call, the Holy Spirit, through the gift of understanding-intus legere 9-, will make us see God himself in a certain way.10 Chapter Ió

THE WORK OF THE RELIGIOUS The love of work is one of the noblest and most appreciated human virtues among men. A hardworking man earns the respect and sympathy of all, unlike the lazy or slothful one, who attracts universal contempt. 8 Cf. 2-2,166.1-2.

“Nomen intellectus quaodam intimam cognitionem importa!: dicitur etiim mielligere quasi intus legere* (2-

2,8,!). 10 <‘In hac etiam vita, purgato oculo per donum intellecUis, Deus quodammodo videri potest” (1-2,69,2 ad 3).

i.

Work, divine law

342 Sacred Scripture frequently praises industriousness, while strongly condemning idleness, laziness or lack of diligence in work: “He who tills the earth shall have plenty of bread; he who goes with the idle shall be filled with poverty” (Prov 28:19). “I passed by the field of the sluggard, and by the vineyard of the foolish. And all were thistles and nettles that had covered his bundle, and his wall was broken down. At the sight of it I pondered, and it was a lesson to me. A little to sleep, a little to sleep, a little hand over hand, resting, And misery comes like a postman, and destitution like a thief” (Prov 24:30-34). “The sluggard desires, but achieves nothing; but the soul of the diligent is satisfied” (Prov 13:4). “Every man shall receive his reward according to his labor” (1 Cor 3:8). “Endure hardship as a good soldier of Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 2:3). “The farmer must be weary before he receives the fruits” (2 Tim 2:6). “He who will not work, let him not eat. For we have heard that there are some among you who live in idleness, doing nothing but idle idleness, busy with idle idleness. Such we command and entreat, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, to work quietly and eat their bread” (2 Thess 3:10-12).

The texts could be multiplied in abundance. The law of work appears from the very first pages of Genesis, even before

the original sin: “Yahweh God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it” (Gen 2:15).

When the catastrophe of disobedience to God’s command comes, the law of work becomes a painful punishment: “In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread” (Gen 3:19).

Work-punishment was sanctified and ennobled by Jesus Christ, the divine worker of Nazareth (cf. Me 6:3). However, not all work is virtuous. It is not virtuous when it is done unwillingly, because it cannot be avoided, or because a superior and perhaps cruel power imposes it. For it to be virtuous, it is necessary to work voluntarily-even if it is to earn one’s bread-and with a supernatural sense, obeying the will of God, who has sapiently established the law of work. Nor should work be confused with agitation. Well-understood industriousness, that is, orderly, prudent, measured activity, is diametrically opposed to laziness. But an agitated activity, which does not do what should be done, which constantly changes its work, can be a symptom and effect of laziness. Laboriousness carries with it promptness and is incompatible with laziness and listlessness; but it does not need to act with ex

and haste. St. Francis de Sales often quoted the Latin proverb: “Sat cite, qui sat bene” (he who works well goes quickly enough). 2*

Work, a source of joy

Christian work, although painful, like everything that involves some effort, is nevertheless a source of true joy. Cardinal Wyszynski has taken up this encouraging aspect in

the last pages of his precious little work on work. 343 “In his activity, man sees the unceasing progress of his abilities, the development of his personality, the perfecting of his physical and spiritual values, to which ever more perfect works bear witness. Is this not a reason for joy? And in this joy, does not man forget the hardships of work? Do not the memory of the efforts made, of the difficulties overcome, multiply the reasons for satisfaction? Do not good people express their admiration and recognition when we have been able to emerge victorious from the intricate forest of struggle and suffering? When the fruit comes to crown our labor, when the efforts of years and years have brought us to the goal of work, to the liberation of the man whose desires have been fulfilled, how great then is our satisfaction! It is in this joyful atmosphere, moreover, that plans for new activities are usually born, even if we do not hide from ourselves that we are going to encounter new sweats, new burdens and sufferings, new sleepless nights. But joy is above all; the man who indulges in idleness will never know it. Nor will he enjoy true rest if he has not known the agony of work. In the same amusements, the fullness of joy belongs to him who has labored. It remains for us to remember the joy that fills the conscience at the completion of a work useful to others, when one has succeeded in giving matter a preconceived form and has realized something in which one reflects oneself insofar as it manifests its usefulness to others. To consider the work itself, its goodness, usefulness and necessity, and its acceptance by our fellow men, provokes in us a satisfaction and a love for the works of our hands similar to God’s love for the world. The Wise Man was right when he said: “I knew that there is no other good for him than to rejoice and be content in his life, for that one eats, drinks and rejoices in his work is God’s gift” (Eccl 3:12). In human work there are also supernatural divine satisfactions 344. Work is, therefore, love of God and neighbor. It is the response of a rational being to that love

by which God invited us, honoring us greatly with it, to participate in his creative activity, to act as a second cause in the divine government of the world.

1

Cardinal Wyszynski,

The spirit of work (Palmos, Madrid, 1958).

p,239-243,

Hence the great dignity of the one who works with God, the extraordinary dignity of his work, which is nothing more nor less than the collaboration of man with the Maker in joy as well as in sorrow; it is the work of prayer, of glorification and of love for God. And as such, it becomes for us the source of a new and great joy, that of an honorable and elevated vocation that offers us to work “hand in hand with God”, that of a spring of actual grace that pours abundantly on human activity, that of the personal grace that accompanies all our endeavors and tasks. And another source of this joy is love for people. Its importance in work is underlined by St. Paul: “And if I divide all my goods and give my body to the fire, not having love, I profit nothing” (I Cor. 33). Nor are there lacking those who, while proclaiming the dignity of work, look upon it with hatred, as an abject necessity. It is, unfortunately, a general tragedy, just as work itself is a universal reality. And yet our labor normally culminates in the world; it creates the bonds of community and thus teaches us charity. The individual works to create and renew goods useful to all; the product of his labor is the manifestation of friendship toward others. In this sense, work

leads us to love our neighbor in God; and for this reason it cannot be done with a clenched fist and a contracted heart; both the hand and the heart must be open. Without this there is no true work; and for this price alone, even the most painful labor, like love, “excuses all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (I Cor 13:7). Thus, without class hatred, the worker will be able to accept all adversities and to possess those virtues without which there is no productive labor. “Charity is patient, it is kind; it is not envious, it is not boastful, it is not puffed up, it is not impolite, it is not selfish, it is not irritable, it does not think evil, it does not rejoice in injustice, it delights not in the truth” (1 Cor 13:4-6). With the truth! With that truth that the whole of creation is filled through open human hands, as through the open hands of God, with the fullness of blessings. Another human joy in work, truly divine joy, is the work of redemption of man operated through work, offered with love to God. When we unite with Him in an act of love we enliven our efforts and wipe the sweat from our brow. When we undertake work out of love for God, divine mercy admits us to a most honorable and fruitful labor: that of reparation. Therefore the work done with the sweat of our brow means for us purification and ennoblement. The feeling of freedom gained through work is the supreme joy. To look God in the face relieves us and fills us with joy in the midst of the effort of labor. Sadness has become joy”.

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3.

The sanctification of work

345* The religious should cultivate in himself the spirit of industriousness and work. Whatever the occupations to which obedience has destined him, he must see in their

punctual execution one of the clearest and most unequivocal forms

of the perfect fulfillment of God’s will. It makes no difference whether it is intellectual work or kitchen work. The only thing that matters is the fulfillment of what God wants us to do. St. Thomas Aquinas sanctified himself by writing his masterly theological treatises, and his brother in the habit, St. Martin de Porres, by sweeping the cloisters of the convent. It would be foolhardy to try to find out which of the two sanctities was greater. But it is necessary to know how to work. The only secret consists in knowing how to sanctify our occupations. The work of the religious must receive the prevailing influence of three great Christian virtues: a) Justice, which imposes this duty on him to compensate in a very small part for the immense benefits he receives from his order or religious institute. b) Religion, which demands it through the vows of obedience and poverty. c) Charity, which is the queen of virtues and converts into pure gold all that it vivifies. “Love of work and work for love”: that is the simplifying and ideal formula. We would like to conclude these considerations on the sanctification of work by offering the reader an admirable page from Rafael Arnaiz, the brave young man from Burgos who was sanctified in an astonishingly rapid manner in the Cistercian abbey of San Isidro de Dueñas. It is three o’clock in the afternoon of a rainy day in the month of December 3. It is time for work, and, as today is Saturday and it is very cold, we do not go out to the fields. We go to work in a warehouse where lentils are cleaned, potatoes are peeled, cabbage is mashed, etc.; we call it the “laboratory”. There is a long table and benches, a window and a crucifix above it. The day is

gloomy, some very ugly clouds, a strong “yes it is not” wind, some drops of water falling as if reluctantly and licking the windows, and dominating everything, a cold worthy of the country and of the time. The truth is that, apart from the cold, which I feel in my icy feet and chilled hands, all this can be said that I can almost imagine it, because I have hardly looked at the window; the afternoon that I suffer today is cloudy, and everything seems cloudy to me. Something overwhelms me in the silence, and it seems that some little devils are bent on making me rage with a thing I call memories.... Patience and wait. In my hands they have placed a knife and in front of me a basket with a kind of very large white carrots that turn out to be turnips. I had never seen them so big and so cold!... 2 Cf. Vida y esnrttos de fray María Rafael Arnaiz Harán, monje trapeóse, 5.* ed. (Madrid *964) p.281-285. We have deleted some suspension points and other punctuation marks. 2 It was exactly December 12, 936.

Time passes slowly, and so does my razor, between the bark and the flesh of the turnips that I am leaving beautifully peeled. The little devils are still giving me war, that I have left my home to come here in this cold to peel these ugly bugs.... A tiny and very subtle demon slips deep inside me, and in gentle ways reminds me of my home, my parents and brothers, my freedom, which I have left to shut myself up here among lentils, potatoes, cabbage and turnips. The day is sad; I don’t look at the window, but I can guess it. My hands are red, red as the little devils; my feet are terrified. And my soul? Lord, perhaps the soul is suffering a little bit.... But never mind, let’s take refuge in silence! What am I doing? Holy Virgin, what a question! Peeling turnips, peeling

turnips! What for? And my heart, jumping up and down, answers half-crazy: “I peel turnips for love, for love of Jesus Christ”. I can no longer say anything that can be clearly understood; but I will say that there, deep inside my soul, a very great peace came in place of the confusion I felt before; I can only say that the mere thought that in the world one can make of the smallest actions of Ja life acts of love of God; that the closing or opening of an eye done in his name can earn us heaven; that peeling a few turnips out of true love for God can give Him as much glory, and us as much merit, as the conquest of the Indies; to think that by His mercy alone I have the enormous good fortune to suffer something for Him, is something that so fills the soul with joy, that, if at that moment I had let myself be carried away by my interior impulses, I would have begun to throw turnips left and right, trying to make the poor roots of the earth communicate the joy of the heart. I would have made real juggling tricks with the turnips, the razor and the apron. I laughed “out loud” (perhaps because of the cold) at the little red devils, who, frightened by my change, hid among the sacks of chickpeas and in a basket of cabbages that were there. What can I complain about? Why be saddened by what is only cause for joy? What more can a soul aspire to than to suffer a little for a crucified God? We are nothing and worth nothing; we are as soon drowned in temptation as we fly consoled at the smallest touch of divine love. When the work began, clouds of sadness covered the sky; the soul suffered from seeing itself on Ja cross, everything weighed on it: the rule, the work, the silence, the lack of light on a day so sad, so grey and so cold; the wind blowing through the glass, the rain and the mud, the lack of sun…. The world so far away, so far away!…, and me, meanwhile, peeling my turnips without thinking of God. But everything passes, even temptation. Time has passed, rest has come, light has come, it doesn’t matter if the day is cold, if there are clouds, if there is wind, if there is sun. What interests me is to peel my

turnips in peace, happy and content, looking at the Virgin Mary, blessing God. What does it matter the regret of a moment, the suffering of an instant! What I can say is that there is no pain that has no compensation, in this life or in the next, and that, in reality, very little is asked of us to gain heaven. Here in a Trappist perhaps it is easier than in the world, but it is not because of the kind of life, because in the world one has the same means to offer something to God; what happens is that the world distracts and wastes a lot.

C'I 7, The sin of the religious man

533

Man is the same here as there; his capacity to suffer and to love is the same; wherever he goes he will carry the cross. Let us know how to make the most of our time, let us know how to love that blessed cross that the Lord places in our path, whatever it may be, however it may be. Let us make the most of those little things of daily life, of ordinary life. It is not necessary to do great things to be great saints; it is enough to make great the little things. Much is wasted in it, but the world is distracting.... In the world it is as good to love God in speaking as in the Trappist in silence; the point is to do something for Him, to remember Him. The place, the place, the occupation is indifferent. God can make me as holy peeling potatoes as ruling an empire. What a pity that the world is so distracted! For I have seen that men are not so bad, and that they all suffer, but do not know how to suffer. If above that cloak of false joy with which the world hides its tears, if above frivolity, if above ignorance of what God is, they would raise their eyes a little on high, surely what happened to the turnip friar would happen to them; many tears would be wiped away, many sorrows would be sweetened, and many crosses would be loved so that they could be offered to Christ. When the work was finished and

in prayer I placed myself at the foot of the dead Jesus, there at his feet I deposited a basket of peeled and clean turnips. I had nothing else to offer him, but anything offered wholeheartedly, be it turnips or empires, is enough for God. The next time I peel roots again, whatever they are, even if they are cold and icy, I ask Mary not to let little red devils come near me to make me angry. Instead, I ask her to send me the angels from heaven to place at the feet of the Virgin Mary red carrots, at the feet of Jesus white turnips, and potatoes, and onions, cabbages and lettuce…. In short, if I live many years in the Trappist I will make of heaven a kind of vegetable market, and when the Lord calls me and says to me; “Enough peeling; drop the razor and the apron and come and enjoy what you have done,…” When I see myself in heaven among God and the saints and so many vegetables…, Lord, my Jesus, I cannot help but laugh”.

Chapter 17 THE SIN OF THE RELIGIOUS The title of this chapter implies a monstrous contradiction. Nothing could be more opposed than sin to the very concept of a person consecrated entirely to God. And yet, the sad reality obliges us to go down to the facts, however sad and regrettable they may be. Sin is not impossible in the religious. His religious profession, by which he gave himself irrevocably to God, does not make him invulnerable to the assaults of the devil or to the weaknesses and frailties of his own human condition. It is necessary to face this unpleasant matter with serenity.

The Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas, dedicates in his Summa Theologica two very interesting articles to the study of the sin of the religious. In the first he wonders if the religious always sins mortally by breaking the observances of his rule. In the second, he examines whether, in the same type of sin, the religious sins more gravely than the layman. Let us take up the doctrine of the Angelicus at the beginning of this chapter. a)

If the religious sins mortally whenever the rule is broken

347*

Here is the answer of the Angelic Doctor 2:

“The rule has two kinds of observances. One, which refers to the end of the rule itself, as are the acts of the virtues. The transgression of these observances, in the aspect that is precepted for all, is mortal sin. With regard to that which goes beyond the obligation precepted for all, there is no mortal sin in its transgression, unless it is done out of contempt, for, as we have already said, the religious is not obliged to be already perfect, but to tend to perfection, to which contempt for perfection is opposed. Other observances refer to exterior exercise, and they are all exterior observances. To some of them the religious is bound by his vows, principally to poverty, chastity and obedience. Transgression in these matters is a mortal sin. In the other observances, although ordered to the fulfillment of the vows, there is no mortal sin in their transgression, except by contempt, which goes directly against the profession made by the religious to live according to the rule, or by the precept given by the superior or contained in the rule, since it would mean to lack the vow of obedience”.

In his answer to the first difficulty, St. Thomas adds some very interesting clarifications: “He who professes a rule does not vow to observe everything contained in that rule, but to live a regular life, which consists essentially of the three vows mentioned. For this reason, in some orders, one professes not the rule, but, what is more prudent, “to live according to the rule”, that is, to apply oneself to conform one’s life to the rule, taking it as a model. This is what contempt is opposed to. In other orders, even more prudently, “obedience according to the rule” is professed, so that it is not against profession but what goes against the precept of the rule. The transgression or omission of the other matters constitutes only venial sin, for, as we have already said, those matters are dispositions with respect to the principal vows, and venial sin is disposition for the mortal, since it is opposed to the means that would help us to observe the most important precepts of the law of Christ, which are the precepts of charity. Finally, in the order of preachers (Dominicans) this transgression or omission does not constitute sin, neither mortal nor venial; it obliges only to the penalty 1 Cf. 2-2,186,9-ro. 2-2,186,9.

But they can sin venially or mortally if they act through negligence, passion or contempt”.

Answering the second difficulty, St. Thomas distinguishes between precept and simple ordination in the religious rule: “Not everything in the law has the force of precept. Some points are only ordinances or statutes, which are binding under certain penalties; this is the case, for example, in civil law, which does not punish every transgression with the death penalty. Thus, in ecclesiastical law, too, not all

ordinances or statutes are binding under mortal sin, and the same is true of the prescriptions of the rule".

In the answer to the third difficulty, St. Thomas specifies what is to be understood by contempt in order to transgress the rule: "Contempt implies a transgression or omission when the will of the transgressor refuses to submit to the prescriptions of the law or rule, and this rebellion impels him to act against them, But when it is a particular motive, such as concupiscence, anger, etc., that impels one to do something against the prescriptions of the law or rule, there is no sin of contempt, even though one falls frequently and for the same motive into the fault. Thus St. Augustine says that not all sins are committed out of contempt born of pride. However, the repetition of the fault disposes to contempt, for it is written: "When the wicked has reached the end of his sin, he falls into contempt" (Prov 18:3)". b)

If the religious sins more gravely than the layman in the same type of sin

348 St. Thomas answers by making some luminous distinctions 4: "In three ways can the sin of religious be more grave than that of laymen within the same species. First, if it goes against the religious vows, such as fornication or theft, which go against the vow of chastity and poverty, besides going against the sixth and seventh commandments of the law of God. Second, it does sin by contempt, for it shows greater ingratitude in the religious before the divine benefits that raised him to the state of perfection. That is why St. Paul says that the faithful Christian deserves greater punishment than he who despises the law of Moses, because, by sinning, he "passes over the Son of God" (Hebr 10:29), that is, he despises the Son of God. This is why the Lord complains: "What has my beloved to do in my house, while he commits iniquities?" (Ier 11:15), Thirdly, the sin of

the religious can be more serious because of the scandal, because they are “the spectacle of many. For this reason we read in Jeremiah: “In the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a horrendous thing: adultery and lying, and 3 The same is true in other religious orders and in all modern congregations, whose constitutions expressly state that they are not obliged to sin, but only to suffer the penalty for their transgression determined by the same iey or imposed by the superiors. (Author’s note.)

2-2,186,10.

They strengthen the hands of the wicked, so that no one may be converted from his wickedness” (1 Peter 23:14). But if a religious sins out of weakness or ignorance, without scorn and without scandal-for example, in concealment-and his sin does not go against his religious vows, he sins less gravely than a layman who commits the same sin. For, if his sin is light, he is in some way absorbed by the many good works he does. And, if it is mortal, he will rise more easily from it, because his intention is ordinarily directed to God and, if for a moment he deviates, he easily returns to his normal state. This is why Origen says, interpreting a psalm: “When a sinner sins again, he does not repent or make reparation for his sin. Et justo, on the other hand, knows how to make amends and correct himself. Thus, St. Peter, who had said: “I do not know this man,” as soon as he looked at him et Lord, he began to weep bitterly. And King David, who saw a woman from the terrace and sinned, knew how to say: “I sinned and did wrong in your presence”. On the other hand, his brothers will help the religious to get up, as we read in the Scripture (Eccl 4:10); “If one falls, another lifts

him up; but woe to him alone, who, if he falls, has no one to lift him up!"

Insisting on the gravity of the sin of contempt committed by the religious, St. Thomas writes in response to a difficulty: "The just do not sin easily through contempt. Sometimes they fall into sins through ignorance or weakness, but they rise up easily. But if they do sin through contempt, they become wicked and almost incorrigible. Jeremiah says (2:20): "Thou hast broken thy yoke, thou hast forsaken all thy yoke, and hast said, I will not serve. And on every high hill and under every green tree you have lain down and played the harlot". In this regard, St. Augustine says: "Since I have begun to serve God, I have found that it is very difficult to find holier men than those who have perfected themselves in monasteries, and also that it is difficult to find them worse than those who have fallen into sin in monasteries" (ad 3).

So much for the Angelic Doctor speaking of the sin of the religious. For more abundance in such an important and transcendental matter, we are going to gather here some magnificent comments of a pious author on this same subject 5. 2.

The sin of the religious in general

349" In general, the sin of the religious has, in relation to that of the laity, a more inexcusable malice, a more odious ingratitude and a blacker perfidy. a) More inexcusable malice. There can never be a reason to offend God: He is so good and has so many rights to our obedience and our love!.... However, without justifying the sins of the laity, there are two things that claim for them the divine compassion: their ignorance and their due5 Cf, Chaignon, S.

I., MA/itations 7*1 ígieuses (Paris 1007) vol.x p.iS3-i6Yes and voi.2 p.3S-S!’ We translate literally, with small retouches.

lity. In general, the laity have less light and less strength for good than the religious. Less enlightened. Apart from the fact that their religious instruction is often very incomplete, the whirlwind of amusements and the dust of business forms around them a kind of cloud that obscures the splendor of heavenly truths. In this world of darkness, can they easily know the wonders and greatness of God, the severity of his judgments and the charm of his infinite perfections? Less strength. The laity more rarely approach the great sources of grace, prayer and the sacraments. The multiplicity of business to which they give themselves and of preoccupations that agitate them, fatigue and weaken their souls. But what do religious lack in this twofold aspect? As for enlightenment, before and after their profession they have heard many exhortations, read many books and have reflected many times. They have been able to study in depth the great and holy truths, of which simple Christians have only a very superficial idea. It was not, then, to these sinners that Jesus was referring when He said: <<Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”. Executioner also of his Savior, the religious knows well what he does when he crucifies him again: if he sins, it is not precisely because of ignorance. Will they come, then, lacking in strength? But what are the helps and aids that are continually offered to him in support of his weakness and frailty? The place where he lives, the people he frequents, his occupations, his rule, even the clothes he wears? everything reminds him of the thoughts of faith. Prayer is his almost habitual exercise; the Mass he celebrates or hears and, above all, the Eucharist

which he receives with great frequency and perhaps daily, is it not the bread of the strong? Can one plead weakness when we can incorporate ourselves to the Almighty? Strength and light, everything protects him. If the religious sins, it is because he wants to sin.

b) Most odious ingratitude. If God is infinitely good for man in general; if his goodness goes to excess for the Christian, according to the expression of St. Paul-propter nimiam caritatem suam, because of the excessive love with which he loved us (Eph 2:4)-it must be said that it goes to the point of wastefulness and prodigality in relation to the religious. <<I was still in my mother’s womb when he set me apart to make me the privileged object of his favors” (cf. Gal 1:15). He preferred me to so many millions of unbelievers as he has left in the shadows of death; to so many Christians who have lost the faith through heresy; to

Can I forget the impressive resources he brought into play to keep me from being shipwrecked in the world and lead me to the safe harbor of religious life? He sowed for me with salutary bitterness the pleasures that would have led me to perdition; He allowed the world to feel little attraction towards me and to show me its ingratitude, in order to force me in a certain way to turn towards Him; He came to look for me in the midst of the frivolities of the world to raise me to a dignity that the angels would envy if they were capable of envying anything? What could God have done for me beyond what He has actually done? In return for so much love, what was he to expect from us? It is a sad truth that the most painful wounds inflicted on the heart of Jesus are received at the hand of his friends. The story goes that a

Roman emperor, falling into the hands of his assassins and distinguishing among them his adopted son, exclaimed in a sorrowful voice: “You too, son!” How does the religious who crucifies Jesus Christ anew for mortal sin, not hear those same words, addressed to him with an even more impressive voice? Long before, he had already exhaled this complaint through the mouth of the royal prophet: “It is not an enemy who reproaches me, for I would bear it. It is not one of those who abhor me who insolently reproaches me; I would hide myself from him. But it is you, my equal, my companion and my intimate, with whom I had sweet confidences in the house of God, as we went together among the mob” (Ps 54:13-15). Who will love me, if you hate me? Who will return for me, if you set yourselves against me? Who will care for my glory, if you reproach me?

c) Blackest perfidy. To disregard freely accepted commitments, to betray one’s word, to fight against the interests one has sworn to defend… is to be perfidious. But perfidy becomes blacker when it is hidden behind the veil of friendship. Horrible condition, almost inseparable from the sin of the religious, especially when it becomes habitual. No one forced the religious to protest before the altar that the Lord would be the only portion of her inheritance; that she preferred the honor of having him as her spouse to all the treasures that the world could offer her. With complete freedom she made him the sacrifice of her own freedom, and imposed on herself the duty of following him in the way of the evangelical counsels by the vows of poverty, obedience and chastity. But these solemn commitments, which have

These vows, so often renewed with apparent sincerity, are trampled upon by the religious when he voluntarily surrenders himself to sin. Was it necessary for the religious to consecrate himself entirely to God in order to sacrilegiously profane his whole being by offending him? Did he promise a more inviolable fidelity in order to make the contempt of his own vows more bitter and hateful? One can well understand the divine reproach so well deserved: “What has my beloved to do in my house, while he commits iniquities?” (1st 11:15). “My beloved”, the one who has been the object of my particular predilection, the one who was filled with graces and blessings; “in my house”, in my own sanctuary, clothed in my livery; “he commits iniquities” without fear of offending me, caring nothing for my honor and my glory. What an abyss of wickedness and perfidy! 3,

Mortal sin

350. All that we have just said about the sin of the religious in general refers almost exclusively to mortal sin. However, we will insist a little more on its dreadful gravity and disastrous consequences, in order to conceive a mortal hatred for it. We will examine what the sinner loses with his sin and the horrendous abyss into which he throws himself. i. °.

What mortal sin makes you lose

a) The friendship of the Lord. If the sinner understood the magnitude of this misfortune, he would not be able to resist it: he would die of grief. We know from history that certain courtiers died materially of grief when they lost the favor of their lord, a mortal man like themselves. Could a religious, conscious of having lost the friendship of his God, find consolation anywhere? God dwelt in him as in a temple: “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word; and my Father will

love him, and we will come to him and make our abode in him" (14:23). God took in relation to the religious the names of father, brother, husband, and had towards him such feelings: sweetest ties united him to him. Mortal sin has absolutely destroyed everything. There is no human catastrophe that can be compared to this. b) The beauty of the soul. The more resplendent was its beauty, the more hideous is the ugliness to which sin has reduced it. Lucifer is not the most horrible of the

but because he was the most beautiful of angels. St. Teresa told her Carmelite daughters that, if they could see the radiance with which their souls shone in grace in the eyes of their adorable spouse, it would never occur to them to glance at what could be more seductive in the world. And in diametric contrast, speaking of the soul in mortal sin, the great saint of Avila writes: "There is no darkness so dark and black that it is not much more dark and black. If they understood this, it would not be possible for anyone to sin, even if he were to put himself to greater labors than can be thought of to flee from the occasions" 6.

c) All the spiritual riches, that is, all the titles to eternal rewards acquired during his entire life. Even if he had treasured up all the merits of the saints, all their prayers, all their austerities, all their sufferings and sacrifices, a single mortal sin would suffice to deprive him of all these priceless goods. We read in the prophet Ezekiel: "If the righteous man turn from his righteousness and do wickedly according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All the righteousnesses that he has done shall not be remembered against him; for his transgressions that he has transgressed, for his sins that he has committed, he shall die for them" (Ezek 18:24). And since a religious, by the mere

fact of being consecrated to God and because obedience sanctifies all his works, can lay up greater treasures for heaven in a few days of fervor than the simple faithful in several months and years, who can calculate all that he loses with a single grave infraction of the law of the Lord? d) The possibility of merit. Whatever a soul devoid of God's friendship because of mortal sin does, it is of no use to it for eternal life. Even if he engages in the most useful works, even if he converts the whole world if possible, even if he surrenders his body to the flames like the martyrs… everything is absolutely sterile for heaven. "Without charity I am nothing" (1 Cor 13:2). The tree has not fallen to the ground, but it no longer produces anything, lacking as it is of all supernatural sap. e) The life of the soul. When it separates itself from God, it dies to the life of grace, although it continues to exist in its natural being. That man who seems to live, since he walks, sees and speaks, is dead in the noblest part of his being. The house is standing, but it is inhabited only by a corpse. 6 St. Teresa,

Moradas c,2 n.i-2.

The abyss into which the morally sinful person is thrown

a) He becomes a slave of the devil. In the state of grace, man is free with the freedom of the children of God. But when the devil succeeds in making him commit a mortal sin, he subjects him completely to his tyrannical slavery. Everything is placed at the service of the devil: the faculties of the soul, the bodily senses, the talents, fortune…. If he demands that which is most unworthy of man, and a fortiori of the Christian and the religious, namely, to commit a

baseness, an infamy, a brutality, a long series of outrages against honor and human dignity, he is punctually obeyed by the soul, his slave* He drags his chains groaning, indignant against himself, but he drags them driven by his passions. Is it not, perhaps, the sinner's own story that St. Augustine tells of the terrible slavery to which his passions held him before his conversion? "I sighed, bound not by another's iron, but by my own will, more difficult to break than iron itself; the devil had taken me by my will, and from it he had made me a chain and imprisoned me..... And with these as links locked together, he had me imprisoned in hard slavery"?

b) He makes himself an enemy of God. By throwing himself at Satan's feet, the sinner naturally makes himself an enemy of God. Not only does he lose his friendship and grace, but he attracts his wrath and divine indignation: "The foolish cannot stand in your sight; you hate all workers of iniquity" (Ps 5:6). God himself has said through the prophet Hosea: "Woe to them when I turn away from them!" (Hos 9:12). And in Deuteronomy he expressly warns: "When I shall add the lightning of my sword and take judgment into my hands, I will repay my enemies with my vengeance, and I will render vengeance to those who hate me" (Deut 32:41). From here come the terrors that torment the guilty man unceasingly, the remorse that pursues him everywhere, especially if he is one of those whose state claimed a greater love for God. It is very regrettable that he should feel in his conscience the gnawing worm of remorse, but it would be much more regrettable if he did not even feel it. For it would be an unmistakable sign of having fallen into the slumber of hardening; and if this sleep is prolonged until death, the awakening will be terrible in an eternity of misfortune. 7 St. Augustine, Confessions 1.8 c.5 n.io.

PJII. Ascetical-mystical aspect of religious life

The “Miserere” of the repentant religious sinner Miserere mei, Detxs: Lord, have mercy on me. Today I do not come before you as a religious, but as a poor sinner; or rather-and this fills me with double confusion-as a religious and a sinner at the same time. If I were only a religious, but not a sinner, I would be entitled to your gentler familiarity; and if I were only a sinner, but not a religious, I would be less unworthy of your indulgence for having abused your benefits less. Therefore, Lord, it is not your ordinary mercy that I implore, but your great, your infinite mercy*. Secundum magnam misericordiam taam. And if one mercy alone is not enough to erase my innumerable iniquities, I ask of you, my God, the whole multitude of your countless mercies; Et seeundum multitudinem miserationum tuarum, dele iniquitatem meara. |So beautiful was my soul when it was united to you as your spouse! But today, my God, You who are holy and sanctity itself, in what a pitiful state do You contemplate it! How many stains do Your eyes wound it! Purify me more and more from my sin and wash me more and more from my iniquities: Amplius lava me ab iniquitate mea, et a peccato meo manda me. I am unworthy to appear before you; but if you reject me, where shall I go? In the name of your infinite clemency, do not cast me from your presence; do not withdraw your Holy Spirit from me. It is He who inspires in me the desire and the will to return to you and the hope of obtaining your forgiveness: Ne proiiciasme afaeie taa, et Spiritum Sanctam tuum ne auferas a me. After I went away from You, supreme Good, I have not had a moment’s rest. I have spent very sad days and very dark nights, and may you, my God, restore to me the healthy joy of innocence! And fortifying me with your grace, never allow my enemy to triumph over my weakness: Redde mihi laetitiam salutaris tuif et spiritu principali confirma me, Oh if I could win for You all the hearts of men and thereby repair the robbery I did to

Your glory by my innumerable sins I If I could show sinners the ineffable sweetness with which You open Your heart to repentance, the very wicked, attracted by the charms of Your infinite mercy, would come to throw themselves into Your arms: Docebo inicuos vias tuas, et impii ad te convertentur. IF to atone for my crimes you would ask me the sacrifice of my sad life, I would offer it to you with all my heart: Quoniam si voluisses sacrificium, dedissem utique. But it is not my blood that You want, but my tears: Holocausto non delectaberis. And it is not even the tears of my eyes, but the weeping of my heart that You want; You are more honored by a contrite and humiliated heart than by torn flesh: Sacrijfidum Deo spiritus contribalatus; cor contritum et hamiliatum, Deas, non despides. Sin profaned the sacred dwelling that You had established in my soul; rebuild your temple. My God, and make it worthy of You: Benigne fac, Domine, tn bona volúntate tua Sion, at aedificentur muri Ierusalem. Then I will approach your altar; and in union with your ministers, I will immolate the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world; I will offer you the great sacrifice that placates your justice and disarms your wrath: Tune acceptabis sacrificium iustitiae, oblationes et holocausta; tune imponent super altare tuum vítulos. If You had not had mercy on me, my penance-so painful

as barren - it would never have ceased, for all eternity; it is very reasonable, then, that it should last until the end of my days. But my gratitude, Lord, will extend beyond this short life: I will praise you, love you, and give you infinite thanks forever and ever. Amen,

Venial sin

351. Venial sin does not lead us away from the last end as mortal sin does. But it is still a moral evil, greater, therefore, than all the physical evils that can befall man, even if it is the loss of life itself. It is appropriate that we pause to examine its inner nature and its dire consequences for the sinner who commits it. a)

Nature of venial sin

Venial sin is a disorder of thought, word, deed or omission contrary to the law of God, but which is not serious enough to cause us to incur his disgrace and bring us eternal damnation. In it are found, however, all the elements that constitute a true sin: God who commands a thing and the man who refuses to obey. Often there is no difference between mortal sin and venial sin other than a question of more or less: more or less complete consent, more or less considerable matter within the same species. Whichever way you look at it, it is a question of an unworthy preference given to the will of man against the will of God. There is in venial sin a contempt for God, a real injury to his infinite perfections. A small injury if compared to that which results from mortal sin, but of a gravity in a certain sense infinite considered in itself, since it is opposed to an infinite majesty. And this is what we do when we indulge in our little angers, in our secret envy, in our slight intemperance; when we indulge in certain lies which do not seriously compromise the reputation of our neighbor, those movements of self-love, those dissipations, those curiosities which absent us from ourselves and take us away from our own heart, those inattentions in our religious exercises and practices of piety, and many other things of the sort. Venial sin is an offense done to God.

Does he love God in this way who takes it as a matter of play to displease and resist him precisely when he commands the easiest and simplest things? Venial sin grieves the Holy Spirit (cf. Eph 4:30) and grieves the heart of Jesus, wounded by our iniquities and crushed by our crimes (cf. Is 53:5). To commit a venial sin because it does not cause us to incur the disgrace of the Lord is a monstrous ingratitude and a repugnant and refined selfishness. St. Teresa rightly writes: "A very warning sin, however small it may be, God forbid: how much more so than not a little, being against so great a majesty and seeing that he is looking at us! It seems to me that this is a sin overthought, and as one who says: Lord, even though it weighs on you, I will do this; I see that you see it and I know that you do not want it and I understand it; but I want to follow my whim and appetite rather than your will. And that in this kind of thing there is little, it does not seem to me, however slight the fault may be, but much and very much" 8.

Venial sin-in fact, after mortal sin, is the greatest of the evils that can befall a creature in time and eternity. Without doubt, the annihilation and, above all, the damnation of all men would be a frightful evil; nevertheless, there would be a disorder in wishing to prevent this catastrophe, if possible, in exchange for committing a single venial sin. It would be a great evil if, by an impossible act, God were to cast out of heaven his august Mother and all the angels and blessed ones; however, it would be a much greater evil to commit a venial sin in order to preserve the Mother of God and all the angels and blessed ones of heaven in their happiness. It would be a great evil that could not be repaired with all the tears of the whole human race, with all the torments of the

martyrs, the austerities of the anchorites, the labors, sufferings and charity of all the saints, with all the good works that have been done since the beginning of the world and will be done until the end of time; and yet, if to all these satisfactions we do not add those of the Incarnate Word, they would be insufficient to repair the outrage done to God by a single venial sin. What should we think of a religious who consoles himself for having offended God and for offending him every day, saying that he does no notable harm, since he commits only venial sins? St. Bernard rightly writes: “Let no one say in his heart: ‘These faults are minor, I do not want to work at correcting them; it is not a matter of time to remain in these minimal sins’.

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venial and venial. For to speak thus would be a kind of impenitence, a kind of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit” $.

Let us listen to what some saints thought about venial sin: St. Edmund: “I would rather throw myself upon a brazier than willingly offend God with any kind of offense”, St. Ignatius of Loyola: “Any man who cares for the purity of his conscience, must be confounded in the presence of the Lord by the slightest sins, considering that he has committed them against Him who is infinite in perfections, which aggravates his malice to infinity”. St. Catherine of Genoa: “I would throw myself into a sea of flames, if necessary, to avoid encountering the slightest venial sin; and I would remain there forever if I had to get out in exchange for committing a single venial sin.” St. Catherine of Siena: “If the immortal soul could die, the sight of a single venial sin,

which tarnishes its beauty, would bring it death". St. Alphonsus Rodriguez: "Lord, may I suffer all the pains of hell rather than commit a single venial sin". b)

Its disastrous effects

Venial sin produces in the soul of the one who voluntarily commits it very great and disastrous effects. Here are the main ones: a) It diminishes the lights of the spirit and makes the clarity of faith less vivid. Every venial sin is like a cloud that is placed between our intelligence and the sun of eternal truth. It is true that it does not produce a total eclipse-which is the proper effect of grave sin-but it considerably diminishes the brightness of its clarity. As faults multiply, the cloud becomes more and more condensed and obscured. From this comes that languid faith with which the most sacred things are treated-Mass, sacraments, etc.-and that life of illusion in which so many souls consecrated to God sleep. b) It weakens the will. Every sin, however slight it may be supposed to be, is a nourishment given, a concession made to an evil inclination; but we can grant nothing to our disordered passions that does not represent an obstacle to the love of God. Concupiscence and divine love are like two bonfires from which the one loses in intensity what the other gains. Repeated infidelities multiply our disordered affections, that is, our chains. The result is

St. Bernard, Sermon i on the Conversion of St. Paul. It can be seen in Obras comple(BAC, Madrid 1953) vol.i p.624.

of all this is that apathy and laziness, that kind of impotence for good. What is the use of so many good desires that are never realized? c) It disfigures and degrades the beauty of the soul. It is a stain on a garment of dazzling whiteness, an ulcer on a most beautiful face. St. Augustine compares it to a loathsome leprosy, which alienates the divine spouse from us and makes us unworthy of his favors” d) It deprives us of a greater degree of grace and, consequently, of the right to a greater degree of glory. We would have merited both by resisting temptation, but we have lost everything by committing venial sin. And what does this loss represent? Nothing less than a God eternally less known, less loved, less glorified. e) It diminishes the actual graces and the paternal tenderness with which God treats those souls who are entirely faithful to him. If we diminish our fidelity, he diminishes his benefits. When one offends with so little delicacy such a great and kind Lord, one does not deserve the solicitous and loving care with which He treats the generous hearts that remain always close to Him with unwavering fidelity. f) It destroys the peace of the soul and often throws it into anguished perplexities: “Who has resisted God and had peace? (Iob 9:4) Have we not crossed the boundary that separates venial sin from mortal sin without even realizing it? Are they always so far from each other as not to confuse their domains? Is discriminatory judgment always easy?

g) It leads to mortal sin. Venial sin, finally, leads to mortal sin, just as sickness leads to death. The divine oracle is categorical: “He who despises little things will gradually fall into great things” (Eccl 19:1); “he who is unfaithful in little things is also unfaithful in much” (Le 16:1). Where did the crimes of Cain, Saul and Judas begin? What smaller things in their beginnings? What outrages to God Luther would have avoided, what blood in Europe, what tears to the Church, if he had repressed in time a slight vanity, a small envy! A

torrent that sweeps over a whole people, is but a trickle of water at its source; a small spark causes a colossal fire. God treats us the way we treat him" It is impossible to conquer

He is generous to us when we are faithful to him; but his infinite justice and majesty cannot leave our continual infidelity unpunished. 5,

The abuse of graces

352* Every sin, whether mortal or venial, always involves a real abuse of the countless graces we have received from God as Christians and as religious. But the simple omission of a good act that is not precepted, that is, the so-called imperfections committed in a fully conscious and free manner, also implies a true imprudence. We will examine what the abuse of graces consists of and the divine punishments that this abuse can entail for us, x.

What is the abuse of graces?

The abuse of graces consists, in short, in despising the gifts of God, in preferring to them our disordered inclinations or the flattery of creatures, in making useless all that Jesus Christ has done and suffered for our redemption. If the authority of God is infinitely respectable, His tenderness towards us should deserve even greater consideration. When He commands a thing, nothing can authorize us to disobey Him. We may try to persuade ourselves that such a divine demand is beyond our strength, that it is too hard, that it is susceptible of a less uncomfortable interpretation, etc.; but all these false reasonings of our passions in no way diminish the importance and gravity of our repudiation of

the divine inspirations. If God speaks to us as master and teacher, our duty is to obey his commands; if he seeks us to offer us his benefits and favors, we cannot refuse him with disdain without wounding his heart, at the same time that we conduct ourselves as cruel enemies of ourselves. Already placed on the slope of the abyss and feeling myself dragged down by the weight of my corrupt nature, I hear your voice, my God, and I feel that you hold out your hand to deliver me from that evil step; but I do not deign not even to look at you, for fear that such a look will turn me from the evil path; I close my ears to your sweet invitation and turn towards the creatures to give free rein to my passions. What an odious preference, what insulting contempt for your kindnesses! But the height of evils is that, abusing your gifts in this way, I destroy, I subvert-at least in what depends on me and in relation to myself-the magnificent work of your redemption. A dejected God and all

I command the form of a servant, a God born in the most extreme poverty, living in the midst of great labors and humiliations, dying amidst torments and opprobrium..., all this was necessary, according to the designs of an infinite wisdom, to merit for me the graces of salvation, and I reject these graces by refusing to take advantage of them í It is, then, the blood of Christ that I reject, a redemption accomplished at such a great price that I become sterile.

What does faith teach us about the price and necessity of grace? That it is the fruit of the humiliations, sufferings and death of a God-Man; that it begins, increases and perfects our merits; that it is for us the seed of eternal glory; that, after the beatific vision, to which it leads, it is the greatest of

all goods. Even if we were to gather together all the treasures that are contained in the earth and in the sea, and were to add all that the human spirit can conceive here on earth of the most sublime and precious, the most insignificant of God's graces, a simple motion of the Holy Spirit is a thousand times more worthy to excite our admiration and our desires. But this is not all. As great as its excellence is the necessity of grace. Without it we can do absolutely nothing in order to our eternal salvation. It is a truth of faith, expressly defined by the Church (cf. D 812) and clearly taught by the Savior in the Gospel: "Without me, you can do nothing" (Io 15:5). St. Paul writes to the Philippians: "It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good pleasure" (Phil 2:13). And to the Gorinthians: "We are not able to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency comes from God" (2 Cor 2:5). Therefore, deprived of actual grace-that is, of divine inspiration-we could not even pray to ask for it or dispose ourselves to receive it. What, then, do we do when we neglect or reject it? We refuse the key to heaven which God offers us, we despise a talent relative to the immortal crown which he alone can merit for us; could we carry further the forgetfulness of our own interests? We grieve when we lose any trifle; and when we lose the graces of God, in comparison with which "all the gold of the world is a grain of sand, and all the silver is as mire" (Sap 7:9), we find no cause for sorrow and tears. It is the height of folly and blindness. My God, how long shall I flee from your loving invitations and violently refuse your sweet solicitations? Give me a docile heart (cf. 3 Kings 3:9) that I may not receive your grace in vain (cf. 2 Cor. 6:1). Have at your disposal

so my soul, that the divine seed may henceforth find good soil and produce in it a hundredfold (cf. Le 8:8), 2,

How does God punish the abuse of graces?

i. In the present life, God subtracts his graces in punishment of the abuse of them, and this punishment is ordinary, just and frightful,

a) Ordinary punishment. We read in the Psalm: “My people did not listen to my voice, they did not obey me, and I abandoned them to their stubborn heart to follow their own counsels” (Ps 80:12-13). And Christ expressly warns us in the Gospel: “Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you, for he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going” (Ps 12:35). Sacred Scripture is full of such threats, and the examples it offers us prove to the point of evidence that God inexorably punishes contempt for grace: Heli, Saul, Judas…, a pontiff who seems guilty only of an excess of condescension towards his children, a king chosen by God himself, an apostle called by Jesus Christ himself, are rejected and lose grace. Are not these punishments ordinary and common in our times? Are they not often exercised on the same religious? Is it not true that God lets them sleep in their lethargic lukewarmness, fall into blindness of spirit and, sometimes, in the loss of vocation and apostasy in punishment for the continuous abuse they made of their graces? b) Just punishment. The Divine Master approaches the door of my heart. He knocks, he insists with tenderness that I open it to fill me with his graces and blessings. But I do not want to open to him, I voluntarily resist his invitations. At best, I propose a postponement: How many times did the angel say to me: “Soul, lean out of the window now: you will see with how much love I am knocking! And how many times, O sovereign beauty,

“Tomorrow we will open it,” I would answer, to answer tomorrow.

Finally, after offering me his benefits in vain, he ceases to importune me with so much mercy and, seeing himself despised, he withdraws. Is it not just? Would it be right for him to reward the slight I do him by offering me indefinitely the graces I refuse? To him who makes himself unworthy of a

treasure that it obstinately rejects, equity and justice demand that it be definitively denied such treasure.

c) Frightful punishment. Grace, or more precisely, God who withdraws, is the sovereign good that withdraws; it is the sovereign evil, sin and hell that draw near. The most dreadful of all misfortunes, that of dying an enemy of God, consists in nothing other than denying a soul the decisive grace with which, before dying, it would have entered into the sentiments of true penitence. The grace that is withdrawn is the light and the strength that abandon us, it is the virtue that disappears, it is in a certain sense the hope of salvation that vanishes. O my God, the time has not yet come to despair, since today, besides your promise to always welcome with love and mercy the sinner who turns to you (cf. Lo 6:37), I receive from you one of the most precious graces, which is the very terror that inspires in me the abuse I have made of so many graces. These lights will bring me closer to you, for I feel a renewed esteem for your inspirations, and I want to determine to cultivate with exquisite care so many precious talents. 2.0 In the other life, God punishes the abuse of graces with a more severe judgment and with more painful penalties. <<To whom

much was given, much will be required” (Le 12:48). The Savior said to the Jews: <<If I had not come and spoken to you, you would have no sin; but now you have no excuse for your sin” (lo 15,22). If I continue to reject his divine inspirations, when I appear before his tribunal I am liable to hear these terrible words: “You would be less guilty if I had favored you less. The multitude and excellence of the graces which my love offered you, and which your negligence rejected, have made you a sinner without excuse in the sight of my divine worship”. And what will be my horror if these divine reproaches are joined by the heart-rending voices of a great number of reprobate people who, surely, will not have had such a profusion of graces to save themselves as I have had? Ah, if only the divine goodness and mercy had done for them all that it has done for me! How can I possibly resist such a terrible comparison? My God, be blessed a thousand times for these lights that you give me now that I am still in time? I know by them the immense loss that I have brought upon myself by refusing your inspirations, the crime I have committed in doing so, and the frightful danger I have suffered by refusing your inspirations.

I now understand with what attention I must henceforth study the movements of grace. I understand now with what attention I must henceforth study the movements of grace, with what gratitude I must receive your inspirations, and with what fidelity and delicacy I must strive to put them into practice. I must and I want to do it, Lord; but I am weak and inconstant: strengthen my weakness and sustain me with your grace so that I may be faithful to you until death. “Convert me and I will be converted” (Ier 31:18): “Give me,

Lord, what you command, and command what you will” (St. Augustine).

Chapter

THE APOSTOLATE OF THE RELIGIOUS 353* Every religious man or woman, whatever the contemplative or active nature of the order or congregation to which he or she belongs, must necessarily be an apostle in the strictest and most rigorous sense of the word. Addressing himself precisely to cloistered nuns - those apparently most distant from any kind of apostolic activity - the immortal pontiff Pius XII wrote: “The perfection of the Christian life consists especially in charity, and the charity that makes us love the Lord alone above all things, and others in Him, is one. For this reason, Holy Mother Church requires of all nuns who canonically profess the contemplative life, at the same time as perfect love for God, perfect charity for their neighbor. In virtue of this charity and of their state, religious men and women should feel themselves devoted to the Church and to the needs of all the poor. All the nuns should be well aware that their vocation is fully apostolic, without limits of place, time or things, extending to everything that, in one way or another, concerns the honor of their Spouse and the salvation of souls”.

There are many ways for a religious man or woman to be an apostle, but they can easily be reduced to five: example, prayer, suffering, charity and the word. Let us examine, albeit briefly, each of these apostolic modalities. !♦

Apostleship of example

354. The first and most impressive form of the religious apostolate must be that of one’s own example, always unblemished and never denied. Without it, they would be totally sterilized

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Cf. Pius XII, Apostolic Constitution Sponsa Christi.

all its other forms and modalities. It is not because it has been repeated a thousand times that the well-known formula ceases to be true: “Words move, but only examples carry us along. Sacred Scripture is full of appeals to the practice of good example. Here are just a few very clear and expressive ones from the New Testament: “You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden, nor can a lamp be lit and placed under a bushel basket, but on a lampstand, that it may give light to all in the house. So let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Mt 5:14-16). “Let us not give occasion for scandal in any way, so that our ministry may not be reproached, but in everything let us show ourselves to be the ministers of God” (2 Cor. 6:3-4). “I beseech you, beloved, as pilgrims and strangers, abstain from fleshly appetites that war against the soul, and observe among the Gentiles an exemplary conduct, so that, in the very thing whereby they reproach you as evildoers, considering your good works, they may glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Petr 2:11-12). “Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the faithful in speech, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in chastity” (1 Tim 4:12), “And in all things show yourself an example of good works, of integrity in doctrine, of gravity, of sound and blameless speech, so that the adversaries may be confounded, having nothing evil to say of us” (Tit 2:7-8).

Today, much emphasis is placed on the value of witness. Today's world is tired of words: it wants deeds, examples of a blameless life, true witnesses to Christ. The psychological power of example," writes Civardi in this regard, "is founded on well-determined laws, which we are pleased to recall. The first law is that truth enters our mind through the door of the senses. For this reason, sensible data have a greater power over our spirit than abstract truths and reasoning, even well elaborated ones. Now, example makes the truth sensible, which, in a certain way, is incarnated in the person and in the facts. We must add that example speaks to the most vivid and impressionable sense: sight. Is it not for this reason that pedagogy exalts the intuitive method? Example is an admirable intuitive lesson. Another psychological reason lies in our instinct of imitation. Just as we yawn when we see another yawning, so, moved as if by an invisible internal mechanism, we perform an action, good or bad, that we see others doing. Is there not talk of a contagion of example? The following also seems to us to be a very important reason: example is the silent language of a convinced person. Conviction begets conviction, in the same way that tears bring tears. Finally, example is like a sweet invitation, a placid exhortation that is spontaneously addressed to others without setting oneself up as teacher or judge, without offending any susceptibility, and leaving intact that freedom that we all love so much.

Civardi, Apostles in one's own environment 3.a ed- (Barcelona 1956) p.50-5,^

For all these reasons, the witness of example is often more effective than that of words. How many souls have been

converted by the example of good Christians! If an officer-writes Fr. Plus-communicates to his soldiers the order of the chief to get out of the trench and face death, and this order consists only of words written on paper, the soldiers will not move. But if the officer goes out first, then the soldiers follow him. If Jesus Christ had merely proclaimed in the Sermon on the Mount, “Blessed are those who are blessed. Mount: Blessed are the poor, those who suffer…” and then had He been seen in a sumptuous palace surrounded by the comforts of life, what practical value would His doctrine have had? For this reason, as St. Luke reminds us (Acts 1:1), he began to work and to teach. He taught what he did. At the last supper, after having stooped to wash the disciples’ feet, he could say: For I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you also should do (Acts 13:15). Why did the doctors of Jerusalem, who in the time of Christ occupied the seat of Moses, have so little influence on the souls of the people? The reason was explained to us by Jesus Christ himself in two words: “They say and do not do” (Mt 23:3). |Is this not also the reason why the teaching of Christians is perhaps sterile for the same reason: they say and do not do? Is this not also the reason for the lack of fruitfulness of our apostolate? Let us allow our conscience to respond freely. Perhaps we should renew our intention to better apply this fundamental law, which consists in harmonizing words with deeds, to accredit doctrine with practice, to recommend our faith with life”),

And let it be borne in mind that the lack of good example not only completely sterilizes the apostolic work of the priest or religious, but often causes positive damage of incalculable scope. There is no gale or storm so furious that it can have such a devastating effect on souls as the scandal or bad example of those who were placed by God to be the “light of the world and the salt of the earth” (cf. Mt. Mt. 24:15; Mt. 24:15). But it is its beneficial and positive aspect

that should impel the religious to practice good example, convinced of its enormous apostolic effectiveness, guaranteed by the most solid theological arguments. Let us listen to a contemporary author explaining the dogmatic foundations of the apostolate of good example: “This apostolate is rooted in the very core of dogma. In fact, according to the Catholic doctrine of the Mystical Body - so happily studied and practiced today - just as in the natural order, God created man so intimately united and related to other men that each one needs the help of the others and, in fact, receives from them innumerable benefits and, in turn, can also influence and help them; so, in the supernatural order, Christ has organized his Church in such a way that all the members that compose it are not only intimately united and related to each other, but also to all the members that compose it. Gilberto Gutiérrez, Necesidad de cultivar la perfección cristiana como ejemplo* ridad, in Actas del 11 Congreso Nacional de Religiosos vol.3 (Madrid 1961) p.136’ridad, in Actas del 11 Congreso Nacional de Religiosos vol.3 (Madrid 1961) p.136‘137.

The Mystical Body is not only united with the Head, on which they depend, but also closely related to each other, in such a way that everything is common among them, and what each one does yields to the benefit or harm of the others; in a manner similar to what happens in the members of the bodily organism, in which the head directs, the eyes see, the ears hear, the tongue speaks, the lungs breathe, the heart gives movement, the hands work, the feet walk… for the good of the whole body. It can be said that the Mystical Body resembles a system of “communicating vessels”; for just as in these any change in one of them has repercussions

in the others (for example, if a drop of liquid is poured into one, it raises the level in all), so in the Mystical Body any good action of one of the Christians, however small and insignificant it may be, influences the others, raises the construction of the spiritual edifice of the Church, contributes to the formation of the total Christ. This constitutes the article of our holy faith, called the communion of saints, a tender and consoling dogma, which serves wonderfully to strengthen the relations among Christians, to increase mutual charity among them and to excite the zeal of the apostolate. For the thought that with any good deed, for example, with a wish, with a prayer, with a supplication, with a suffering, with a good example, one can do good to one's neighbor, one can cooperate in the growth and development of the Mystical Body of Christ, is a stimulus, a very powerful incentive to strive to do good at all times and in all circumstances, to lead an irreproachable and holy conduct, which is a silent but effective preaching to others. This consideration should always be kept in mind, above all, by religious who have embraced a holier kind of life, who are the professionals of perfection and who, therefore, should serve as models and exemplars for other Christians. They, who constitute in the Church of God a state of exception, of privilege, because of the abundance and ease of means at their disposal for the practice of virtue, should teach them by the effective lesson of works, by the convincing and irresistible argument of example, how to live fully and generously the authentic Christian life. Today, when the ministry of the word is so discredited, because it is often contradicted by works; today, when the world maliciously applies to priests and religious the sure and infallible criterion of opertbus credite: “believe in works” (cf. Acts 10:38); today the apostolate of example is more necessary than ever; it is more necessary than ever to bear witness to Christ with unblemished conduct before the world; to be witnesses to Christ with one's own person,

modelled on that of the Divine Master. Therefore, to that arrogant, ambitious, independent world, enemy of every law and of every obstacle to its whims, religious, with their submissive, prompt and joyful obedience, must teach obedience to God and submit to his divine precepts. To that sensual, materialistic, corrupt world, greedy for pleasures and pleasures of the flesh, the religious, with their angelic chastity and purity, must teach that with divine grace it is possible for the present man to dominate the passions and appetites of the flesh and to keep the beautiful virtue of purity, even in the secular state. Finally, religious, with the vow and virtue of poverty scrupulously guarded, should teach this world, which is greedy for riches, money, earthly goods, and expired goods, that there are other goods and riches that are the true and only ones that can fully satisfy the legitimate aspirations of the human heart, created certainly to be happy and joyful, but not with the things of the earth, expired and deleterious, but with the things of heaven, firm and lasting.

Apostleship of prayer

3 5 5* Another apostolic modality of the highest order is fervent and continuous prayer. It constitutes the foundation and the very essence of the interior life, which has been, is and always will be the soul of every apostolate.4 We offer the reader some ideas from a magnificent article on the apostolic value of the interior life, which is among the most accurate we have read from a theological point of view.5 “The apostolate would not fulfill its very purpose if, together

with faith, it did not work to transmit the divine life. “The apostolate would not fulfill its very purpose if, together with faith, it did not work to transmit the divine life. Its exercise, therefore, cannot be separated from the interior life of the apostle, and he will not be able to renew his strength if he does not live in intimate union with God. These truths are so evident that, at least in theory, we all admit them without any difficulty. But in practice, and under the influence of the world around them, apostles run the risk of not remembering them sufficiently and of reducing their apostolate to a constant and sometimes feverish search for ways of access, methods, techniques.... . Undoubtedly, all this constitutes a duty for them, because if it is true that they are not of the world, they must remain in it and attend to those who live in it. But this solicitude and this search carry with them the risk of not leaving in full light and in the first place what is essential to every Christian apostolate, which is of a spiritual and supernatural order. After having examined the many ramifications in which the apostolate unfolds in order to attain the numerous purposes assigned to it, it is appropriate to contemplate in their unity the common trunk, or rather, the hidden root that provides all its forms with the necessary sap. By this hidden root of the apostolate we mean prayer, to which must be added the sacrifices, which, after all, are nothing more than an extension of prayer in the order of life. We will present the doctrine in the form of propositions. 4 The classic work on this subject is that of the Cistercian abbot Dom J. B. Chautard, The Soul of Every Apostolate, a golden booklet, translated into the principal languages of the world, which should be reread and meditated upon frequently by all those who devote their lives to apostolic activities. It can never be praised and pondered enough. s Cf Paul-Marie de la Croix, O. C. D., Valeur apostalique de la vie intérieure, in Uapostalat c.7- (Editions du Ccrf, Paris 1957) p.i2$ss.

P.III. Ascetical-mystical aspect of religious life.

1. Prayer and sacrifice, far from being in any way opposed to the exterior and visible apostolate, give it its very soul,

356. To be convinced of this, it is enough to contemplate the exemplar of every apostolate, which for us is Christ. Throughout the Gospel we can see that all the exterior action of Christ is sustained by a plot that is usually invisible, but which at times appears to the exterior, and it is none other than prayer. We know that before choosing his disciples he spent a whole night in prayer on a mountaintop. He prayed for his apostle Peter, so that his faith would not falter. He prayed in the midst of unutterable anguish and mortal agony in Gethsemane and on Calvary. He prayed for all mankind, and especially for his apostles. This value of prayer is not an evangelical “novelty”. The Old Testament affirms it repeatedly, and the whole of Sacred Scripture shows clearly and unequivocally that prayer, and also sacrifices, achieve their goal in a certain and infallible way. Christ himself clearly taught his apostles that the apostolate must be preceded and accompanied by prayer, the fruit of which must be precisely the efficacy of the apostolate itself (cf. Acts 1:6-14). Every human activity, by the very fact of being human and in order to be fully human, must involve the body and the soul: the body, that is, the external manifestations without which nothing here on earth can be perceived, transmitted and realized, and the soul, that is, the invisible activity that gives an action its orientation, its spiritual intention and penetrates it with love. While the “body” of actions or works remains ambivalent, its “soul” measures and determines its value before God. In this sense Christ said: “It is not what goes into a man that defiles him, but what comes out of him” (cf. Mt 15:11), and in the same

sense St. Therese of the Child Jesus affirms: “God has no need of our works, but only of our love”. The saint of Lisieux in no way doubts-she who would have wanted to be an “apostle, missionary, soldier and martyr”-the usefulness of the apostolate in its visible form; but she affirms that the mystery of the intimate life of God, apprehended and participated in prayer, is the beginning of all fruitfulness in the world. To the very extent that we reserve space for the exercise of this supernatural life in ourselves and in others, the apostolate fulfills its function. The

creatures add nothing to the fullness of God, least of all the limited and expired works that they are allowed to perform. The only way to give value to these works is to unite ourselves to the Word of God incarnate. 2.a The extraordinary value of prayer comes from the fact that with it we put ourselves in direct and immediate contact with God.

357. In the spiritual order, what measures and values any act is, together with the love that informs it, its more or less close and direct reference to God. From this point of view, the privileged place of prayer is clear, since, by its very nature, it is nothing more than a movement, an impulse, an ascent toward God. Prayer is directed directly to God, it tends towards Him alone. Often, in practice, prayer is used for personal ends; often it is also a means to serve God and to use Him for our own ends, instead of serving Him and referring totally to Him. But deformations and excesses have never been able to change the nature and value of a spiritual reality. On the other hand, the dangers that beset prayer and its “Geocentrism” threaten even more the

different forms of the external apostolate. It is easier to lose sight of God in external works than in prayer. What gives prayer its privileged value, then, is that, in itself and by its very nature, it is an impulse of adoration, trust and love for God, and at the same time a renunciation of ourselves. One cannot pray in a true way without feeling impelled to dominate one's human instincts, to fight against everything that concentrates us in ourselves; one cannot pray without feeling impelled to prefer God and to place ourselves in the essential attitude of being relative and participating in the presence of the absolute Being. What gives prayer its privileged value is also the fact that it realizes this impulse and this reference to God by bringing into play the theological virtues. By this very fact, prayer places us in the midst of a supernatural environment, and precisely because the theological virtues never cease to be exercised in it, prayer sanctifies us and impels us to the apostolate. Finally, and above all, prayer places us on the plane of being, since its mission is to bring us into communication with Being.

But God, who is "pure act," did not tell us that he is "the one who does," but "the one who £5" (cf. Ex 3:14). Consequently, what will bring us closer to God and make us more like Him is not what is situated on the plane of "doing", but on the plane of "being". But it is precisely on this plane that prayer and sacrifices are situated. The one and the others, in fact, flow into God and open the way for him to invade us. By their very nature, prayer and sacrifices are "transforming". One becomes what one contemplates, what one loves, what one sacrifices oneself for. God is and God is love (cf. 1 Sir 4:8). Everything we know about God is concentrated in this double formula. Prayer does not have as

its essential purpose to expose to God our needs or to ask him to come to the aid of our misery (although all this can and must be presented with confidence), but it has the purpose of putting us in communication and communion with his Being, making us progressively “participants in the divine nature” (cf. 2 Petr 1:4). By this way something will be “done” in us; but here the word “done” does not have its usual meaning at all. Indeed, when we say that something is “done” in us by virtue of prayer, we must understand that our soul is made fit to allow itself to be invaded by the true, permanent, eternal and absolute Being, and, by the same token, it is made fit to be divinized by participation in the divine Life itself. It is enough to have ever prayed in an authentic and true way, or rather to have been visited by God in prayer, to experience that there is no common measure between the order of divine things and that of all other things. What there is in God himself that seems to belong in the highest degree to the order of “doing”-creation-has, in reality, nothing in common with our “action.” To say that things have been made by God is tantamount to saying that they have been called into being by virtue of his divine Word. What we call “making” is never anything other than a poor industry, a fabrication, a “manufacture,” a simple transformation of something that already existed. It is strange and regrettable, indeed, that this poor and simple transformation appears before us today as a sign of the superiority and kingship of homo faber over the world; being so that Genesis places this kingship in the fact that Adam gave mon

The prayer, not by placing itself in a contingent order, does not resemble “doing” but “being” (cf. Gen 2:19), that is,

according to Semitic thought, in manifesting that its participatory power was exercised in the “image and likeness” of God’s own power. Prayer, not being placed in a contingent order, does not resemble “doing”, but “being”. It brings about a true creation, but on the supernatural plane. This creation consists in making us become again what we were no longer. This is why, on our side, prayer is at the top of the hierarchy of human activities, because it participates in a divine operation in us. Prayer realizes the presence of its object and knows no other limitation than the intensity and purity of its love.

By making us participate in the Being of God, prayer also brings us into communion with Him insofar as He is Love. Here again, it is necessary to reform our ideas. We ordinarily believe that love is operative only by means of acts. Undoubtedly, God himself has asked us for proofs of love, which must be translated at the level of life and in external acts: “Not everyone who says, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Mt 7:21). It is also true that Christ said that “there is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (Mt. 15:13); and also that “he who loves him is he who keeps his commandments” (Mt. 14:15). But who does not see in the person of the Master himself that this love which impelled him to give himself for us to suffering and death pre-existed these events, thanks to which it has been manifested to us? This love that Christ bore in his heart was also manifested by the Father at the beginning of the incarnation: “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son” (Acts 3:16), and Christ himself, at the beginning of his passion and death: “Because of the great love with which he loved us” (Eph 2:4); “he loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20). The apostle of the Gentiles realized perfectly that love comes first and that the acts come later and are only the external manifestation of a more

essential reality. The supernatural fruitfulness of prayer comes from the fact that it intensifies our union with Christ.

We have seen to what extent prayer brings us into communion with God. Christ repeatedly insisted on the need to maintain this communion and to elevate it to a level, not of a passing union, but of a habitual state: “Abide in my love” (Acts 15:9), he told his apostles on

last day that he spent among them. And he added: “He who abides in me and I in him bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (Io 15:5), thus underlining that the fruitfulness of the apostolate has its source in an intimate union with him, which is the fruit of contemplative and transforming prayer. If we can do nothing without Christ and if, on the contrary, “he who believes in me will also do the works that I do, and will do them even greater” (14:12), it is clear that the apostle must strive to unite himself as intimately as possible with the divine Master, since this is the very condition of his apostolic fruitfulness. Undoubtedly, this union with Christ refers to and embraces the entire apostolic life, and must be applied to works as well as to the life of prayer. Nevertheless, it is easy to understand that it is very difficult to keep this union alive, and even more difficult to develop it in the midst of action and in the midst of the practical problems of the apostolate. At most, the apostle will be able to give his activity a supernatural orientation, by means of a common intention formulated at the beginning of the day and renewed from time to time. He will be happy if in this way he succeeds in keeping in touch with God. But only an ever more intense recourse to prayer will enable him to deepen this contact. Prayer, in fact, not only brings us ever closer to God, but also makes us perceive, in an experiential and lived way, that the apostolate does not

consist in putting our strength and our activity at Christ's service, but rather in becoming united instruments through whom and by means of whom he continues to personally apply the fruits of redemption to souls. The apostle has no other mission than to enable Christ to continue and perpetuate his redemptive mission through the centuries and on all levels. To achieve this, it is necessary to immerse oneself in the mystery of prayer and to live it fully. Otherwise, the apostolate will always remain, despite all appearances and external successes, a human work, without supernatural fruitfulness. "Without me, you can do nothing" (Lk 15:5). Even if we are intimately convinced of the truth of these words, we will soon cease to live them practically if prayer does not constantly bring them back to life. Prayer-and I dare say contemplative prayer-is the only prayer that enables the apostle to know experientially the supernatural economy of salvation. This is always

Christ alone is the one who continues to carry out the work of Christ in us and through us. In us and through us, it is Christ himself who baptizes, converts, heals, forgives, saves… and not us. For the same reason, if prayer does not rise to the very thought and plan of God, and is content to ask for the strength and the means to carry out successfully the particular work undertaken, the apostle will not realize this union with Christ of which we are speaking. It is certainly not forbidden to the apostle to keep present in his spirit and in his heart the very object of his apostolate, and the thought of the souls he is trying to bring closer to God and save. The great contemplatives are no strangers to this concern and everyone knows the words of St. Teresa of Avila, full of apostolic fire and impetus: "From here - from the

vision of hell - I also gained the great sorrow that I feel for the many souls that are condemned (of these Lutherans in particular, because they were already members of the Church through baptism), and the great impetus to take advantage of souls / that it seems certain to me that to free a single one from such grave torments I would willingly die many deaths “6.

But whether the apostolate is exercised in the contemplative life, as in the case of St. Teresa, or in incessant apostolic journeys in mission countries, as in the case of St. Francis Xavier, the apostle always draws his fruitfulness from his intimate union with Jesus Christ.

359* Prayer is the great lever capable of lifting up the world. In the silence and recollection of a monastic cloister, a contemplative soul can and must be a great apostle. It has been said-and it may well be true-that St. Teresa of Jesus saved as many souls with her contemplative prayer as St. Francis Xavier did with his incredible apostolic works. Another great advantage of the apostolate of prayer is that it can be exercised by all kinds of people: healthy or sick, men or women, priests, religious or laity. Not everyone can climb into a pulpit or go on mission personally to unbelieving countries; but everyone can exercise the wonderful apostolate of prayer, which, together with their own sanctification, will ensure the efficacy and fruitfulness of the labors and labors of the active apostles. The fact that the Church has declared a cloistered nun - St. Paul - to be an apostle of prayer, together with her own sanctification, will ensure the effectiveness and fruitfulness of the labors and labors of the active apostles.

Santa Teresa,

Life c.32 n.6.

The fact that the patroness of all the Catholic missions, St. Therese of the Child Jesus, next to the colossal figure of St. Francis Xavier, is extraordinarily significant for anyone who knows how to draw the consequences. 3.

Apostolate of suffering

360. Here is another kind of apostolate within everyone’s reach. Pain is the inevitable patrimony of sinful humanity. No one has lived nor will live without suffering from Adam onward. The great secret consists in knowing how to divinize suffering, exploiting it as a treasure for one’s own benefit and that of others. Father Plus has written very beautiful pages on the apostolate of suffering. As a sample, here are some of the most beautiful7: “We instruct souls by the word - Fr. Chevrier used to say - but they are saved by suffering”. In fact, sacrifice is even more apostolic than prayer. And prayer itself is not fruitful if we have not taken care to mix with it a drop of blood. The apostolate that is done only with words rarely penetrates to the depths of hearts. A human freedom^ capable of resisting God - to the most vibrant calls of God - can, with all the more reason, oppose a human word when it is but a bit of whipped air. The weapon that triumphs invincibly is sacrifice. A priest complained to the holy Curé of Ars that he had tried everything to convert his parishioners, to no avail. “Have you tried everything, have you fasted, have you put on a sackcloth, have you taken up discipline? As long as you have not suffered for your sheep you cannot say that you have tried everything to bring them to God.” The word of a saint. Suffering is the currency with

which efficacy is bought. That sacrifice-since we take suffering in its broadest sense, and not in the strict sense of physical suffering-is the redemptive means par excellence, we have as a guarantee the example of our Lord Jesus Christ himself. Having a choice as to the procedures he wished to employ, the Lord employs in a large measure exterior zeal and prayer. But he points to Calvary as the culminating point of his redemptive mission. Strictly speaking, the least action of Jesus Christ was salvific; but in fact, the cross deserves the name of capital instrument of salvation: Without the shedding of blood there is no remission (Hebr 9:22). Without the shedding of the blood of the Lamb nothing would have been done. Thanks to this redemptive effusion all things have been restored. “It was necessary that Christ should suffer” (Le 24:26)? The Savior was not a mediator in any way; he constituted himself mediator by sacrifice, “by the blood of his cross” (Col 1:14; Eph 1:7). The cross, that is what dominates the whole history of Christ, the whole history of the world….

Raúl Plus, S. I., Cristo en nuestros prójimos (Barcelona 1943) P-2o6ff.

Whatever path man takes in search of God, if he follows it enough, he will always end up at the cross* One would say that it closes the horizon. Man can make a barrier or a ladder to go up from crosses assembled together. It is up to him to combine them well. Thus Jesus Christ inaugurated the first apostolate through suffering, and he willed that, in his career, this apostolate should be the most fruitful of all. The rule will be the same for the disciples of Christ? Throughout the centuries, where we see a particularly fruitful apostolate,

we do not need lengthy research to find the deep reason for this irradiation. Blood is found on the site; not always the blood of the veins, but at least always the complete sacrifice; the breaking of the heart and of the will and the complete gift of self. There is but one formula for every birth. In dolore paries (Gen 3:16). Whether it is a question of bodies or of souls, there is no begetting without pain. Likewise, a single formula summarizes all fecundities: Nist granum frumenti… (Io 12:24). (Io 12:24), It is necessary that the grain be buried and die so that the seed may germinate".

Prostrate on his bed of pain, absolutely unable to carry out any apostolic activity, a sick person who has an authentic spirit of faith and knows how to offer his sufferings in intimate union with those of Jesus Christ the Redeemer can carry out an amazing apostolate and convert thousands of souls. But it is necessary to suffer with great faith, with an ardent love and, above all, in intimate union with the sufferings of Jesus and Mary, the Redeemer and Coredemptrix of humanity. Our sorrows, as ours, are worth nothing; our blood, as ours, is impure; but our sorrows and our blood, united to those of Jesus and Mary, have an infinite value. It is the drop of water that is mixed in the chalice of the Mass and that becomes Christ when the priest pronounces the words of consecration. The necessity of pain in the economy of the salvation of souls is easily understood by taking into account the psychology of sin* In every sin-in effect, the sinner seeks to obtain a pleasure, a satisfaction, knowing that it is forbidden by God. If, instead of producing pleasure, sin were to produce pain, no one would sin at all. Now, if the sinner has unbalanced the scales of God's justice by unduly placing the weight of a forbidden pleasure on one of the pans, the most elementary justice demands that the balance be restored only by placing the weight of a pain, which is the opposite of pleasure, on the other pan. This is

not a capricious demand of God-blasphemy would be to think so-but something demanded by the very nature of things and by the most elementary justice. Now, by virtue of the universal solidarity of all men in Christ, as Redeemer of the world, the deu

The pain that humanity collectively and universally had contracted with God was more than satisfied by Christ himself. But it is necessary that this infinite satisfaction be applied to each one of us on the basis of our own small painful contribution-in our own favor or in favor of our brothers-and this is what St. Paul wanted to express in that mysterious formula: “I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and I suffer in my flesh what is lacking in the tribulations of Christ for the sake of his body, which is the Church” (Col 1:24). For this reason, Christian suffering, offered to God in an apostolic plan and in a state of grace, can never be sterile. It always enters into the treasury of the Church and God uses it to save the soul of the person for whom it is applied, or for the salvation of thousands of souls, since, as we have said, in union with those of Christ the Redeemer, our little pains and sufferings attain an infinite value. It is possible that in the farthest corner of the world in which we live there is a sinner in agony who needs the grace of conversion in order to be saved. And Christ can use the sacrifice being offered to him by a suffering member of his Mystical Body to bring to that dying wretch the light of faith and the grace of repentance. One of the greatest surprises and the most intimate joys that the apostles of pain and suffering will experience when they reach the other world will be the contemplation of the enormous number of souls that they were able to save with the hidden and silent

efficacy of their own pains endured in this world with love and in intimate union with Christ. When, in the first years of his apostolate in East Africa, Bishop Le Roy was assisting a dying missionary*, the latter said to him, “My life is coming to an end.... I am happy with the use I have made of it. Then, suddenly, his eyes were fixed, immobile* on a point in space, while his face was transfigured. -Father,” asked the monsignor, “what do you see? -I see,” he answered, “a long procession of blacks coming down from the sky..... I imagine that they are the ones I have baptized..... They are coming to look for me.... And saying this, he breathed his last” 8 9.

4.

Apostolate of charity 9

361. Another of the most efficacious exercise of charity, which is most effective, is that of the proterious spirits who refuse it, even when it appears radiant before them.

means of apostolate is the one for the neighbor. There are to surrender to the truth, their eyes; but those same

Cf. Goiburu, El problema misionero vol.i 2.a ed, p.36. 9 Cf. our work Jesucristo y Id vida cristiana (BAC* Madrid 1961) n.519.

stubborn people are easily bowed down before love. Charity, when it is endearing and authentic, has an irresistible force. We could cite a long series of impressive examples. The Divine Master knew very well the sovereign efficacy of charity in the exercise of the apostolate. Instructing his disciples on how to exercise it, he told them: In whatever

city you enter, go to the sick who are in it and say to them: The kingdom of God is near you (Le 10:8-9).

First heal (corporal charity) and then preach the Gospel (spiritual charity). Once the heart has been conquered by the exercise of charity, it is an easy task to conquer the intelligence with the splendors of truth. Often, in fact, the insurmountable obstacle to the acceptance of the truth is not in the intelligence, but in the bad dispositions of the heart. It is necessary to conquer the latter beforehand if we want to decisively influence the former. But it is not enough to give. It is necessary to give oneself, following the example of the Divine Master. Christ loved us," writes St. Paul, "and gave himself up for us as an oblation and a sacrifice to God for a sweet savor (Eph 5:2). No Christian has reached perfection in the practice of the apostolate if he is not willing-at least in the sincere preparation of his soul-to give his life for the salvation of his brethren. This, while heroic, would be nothing more, in the final analysis, than a poor imitation of the conduct of his Master, the Good Shepherd who sacrificed his life for his sheep (cf. Lk 10:11). Today, more than ever, the practice of charity in the exercise of the apostolate is more necessary than ever. The world, deceived and chastened by so many political systems and false redeemers who promised it a paradise of happiness that never ends up arriving, has lost faith in words. He demands facts in order to be convinced. The modern world," writes Givardi, skeptical and full of aberrations, "no longer understands or no longer wants to hear the language of Christian theology and philosophy; but, fortunately for us, it still gladly listens to and understands the word of charity. Let us speak to him, then, this sweet and insinuating language, which the first Christians knew how to speak so well, still under the charm of Christ's example. Let us place our faith under the shield of charity. Let us accredit this faith with the exercise of charity, which is like the seal of God's hand".

. The apostolate of charity is exercised in a variety of ways. The most impressive of these concern the endearing practice of the so-called works of mercy, of which the catechism, by way of example, recalls fourteen, seven of which 10 Civardi,

Apostles in their own environment

3*

ed. (Bsrcdona 1956) p.61-62.

are of the corporal order and the other seven of the spiritual order. These are: a) 1. a 2. a 3. a 4. a 5. a 6. a 7. a b)

Of corporal order: Visit the sick. Feed the hungry. Give drink to the thirsty. To redeem the captive. Clothe the naked. To give lodging to the pilgrim. To bury the dead, Of spiritual order:

i. to teach those who do not know, 2. to give good advice to those who need it, 3. to correct those who err. 3. to correct those who err. 4. to Forgive injuries. 5. to comfort the sad. 6. to suffer with patience the faults of our neighbors. 7. to pray to God for the living and the dead.

We refer the reader to another of our works in which we have commented extensively on each of these works of mercy n. 5.

Apostolate of the Word

Less important than the four apostolic modalities we have just examined, the word constitutes another powerful means which must be properly used in order to obtain the maximum apostolic efficacy from it. The apostolate of the word cannot be underestimated. Jesus Christ preached by example and word: He did and taught (Acts 1:1), and sent his disciples to preach the Gospel throughout the whole world (cf. Mk. 16:15). No Christian can disengage himself from this duty of apostolate, least of all a religious man or woman. No exceptional conditions of orator are required for this, nor any official mission. Not every religious-and certainly not every nun-can occupy the pulpit to proclaim officially to the people the Gospel of the Lord. But all can exercise in a thousand ways the apostolate of the word in their own environment. A kind word, a good piece of advice accompanied by a little service, an affectionate reproach, an exhortation full of naturalness and simplicity, a long conversation about 11 Cf. Theology of Charity, 2nd ed (BAO, Madrid 1963) n.328-378.

subjects that are of no interest to us, but which deeply affect our interlocutor, and a thousand other things of the same kind, can represent, and often do represent, a splendid apostolate on the souls of our fellow men and women. The written word is also an excellent means of apostolate. An affectionate and timely letter, a good book that is lent, a Catholic newspaper, a leaflet, etc., can bring a message of light and love to a soul that is lost or about to stray into the ways of evil. Apostolic zeal is very ingenious in finding in each case the most effective and opportune thing to give to a soul in order to lead it to God. A few years ago, the Archbishop of Valencia, Don Marcelino Olaechea, published

a beautiful pastoral on preaching, which is a true model of simplicity, apostolic zeal and good practical sense. We offer to the religious preachers the main paragraphs of the same 12: “Venerable brothers: The most eminent Cardinal Saliége, Archbishop of Toulouse, has written these words: “A problem that events will force us to solve is that of preaching. Our preaching no longer has a hold on souls. We have preserved an unused, unintelligible way of preaching. Our contemporaries love direct language and not dissertations; the word that goes straight to the soul; the word that says something; not the easy word that says nothing. There is, therefore, a preaching problem to solve. To know the world, to become aware of its desires and needs, to know how to make an impression on it, how to find the way for the truth to take root, it is necessary to live in it. Theological science, yes; but the presentation of it is very important. There are more resources of spiritual life in the Gospel than in the Theological Swna. It can be said (it is a paradox) that theological preaching is not evangelical preaching”.

Even though these sharp words are written for other clergy, it will not be superfluous, venerable brethren, to see if they can be of any use to us. Since preaching is essentially our mission, in such a way that no one can carry it out in our diocese unless called and approved by Us, we want to remind those who have received from Us, or in the future will receive, this call12 Cf. Official Bulletin of the Archbishopric of Valencia, October 1, 1947. 13 Benedict XV in his encyclical Humani generis redemptionem, on preaching.

The preaching should be frequent, short, simple, simple, juicy, paternal and disinterested, and should always strive to

be more and more frequent, short, simple, juicy, paternal and disinterested. Frequent

Do not neglect, venerable brethren (and in particular those of you who have the care of souls), any occasion that presents itself propitious to enlighten the minds and move the hearts of the faithful. A baptism, a first communion, a funeral or a burial, a public act in which a favorable occasion arises, can serve you to leave in the souls (sometimes of those who do not usually go to church) the word of life that makes them think of the novices, in the goodness of God, in the brotherhood that we have in Christ.... Preach, preach as often as possible. You well know that we are doing nothing more than repeating to you the advice of the Apostle. Not only the people, but the upper and ruling classes themselves, sometimes know much less religion than we think they do. Religious ignorance is the great evil of our times; and from it come indifference and hatred of the things of God and his servants. The Pope has just said to the men of Catholic Action in Italy: “An expression has been invented, ‘religious anemia,’ which resounds like a cry of alarm. This anemia of all classes, of intellectuals and workers, is to be attributed mainly to a religious ignorance, which is sometimes complete. This ignorance must be extirpated. It is a task that falls mainly on the clergy”.

On the other hand, this world, which seems to want to sink in matter, is eager to know religion, and they usually listen to us with pleasure if we preach to them with sincere charity. Short

But preach always with brevity. Do not detain the people except as long as necessary. Do not tire them. Modern society is greedy of time. Let them always be eager to hear you. Avoid the profusion of words, the torrent of names.

and adjectives, long or confusing paragraphs, dissertations that are not within the natural reach of the listeners. Avoid letting the sermon (without any reason or pretext to the contrary) exceed half an hour. Homilies can last from five minutes to a quarter of an hour. Simple

If we seek not ourselves, but Jesus Christ; if we work sincerely for souls, we will not be “ashamed to speak simply and plainly, lest people think poorly of our intellectual gifts” (encyclical Humani generis); and we should avoid “being flattering to the ear, having a gesture that is loose and characteristic of comedians or of populist orators, the soft emission of the voice, tragic outbursts, the journalistic style, quotations from impious or acatolic authors, and the torrent of rumbustious words”. Of a distinguished prelate, who was as short in stature as he was a giant in spirit, his diocesan baturros used to say: “The bishop, when he preaches, seems to speak”. What a charming praise for a true pastor of souls! At the end of the sacred prayer, may you have the consolation of thinking that you have been understood even in the details; that you have been followed with interest for having succeeded in establishing a dialogue between your soul and that of your listeners; and above all, that you have left in them clear ideas and an encouragement and purpose to improve their lives. Simplicity is not triviality; it is not unpreparedness; it is not to go up to the pulpit and say whatever comes out. The word of God must go in a golden vessel; but it must shine and not him. A neat and natural simplicity (unsurpassable example, the holy Gospel) is the best clothing of the divine word. Few ideas (because the people digest few); but well ordered, well exposed, well riveted; avoiding the tired and dull speech. Juicy

Juice *of Sacred Scripture (in particular of the Holy Gospel), juice of theology (digestible by the listeners), of the Holy Fathers, of Church history. Above all, first and foremost, the Holy Gospel. One does not know Jesus Christ (life, miracles, teachings, etc.).

the incomparable parables and similes, passion, death and glorious ascension) because the holy Gospel is little studied. Do not content yourselves with exposing to the people the Sunday passages that are the object of the homily. Let the people know the whole life of Jesus Christ and all his teachings. Get those great sons and daughters of the Church, the teachers, interested so that, together with Christian doctrine, they may teach the children the Holy Gospel. How much we have enjoyed and how much we will enjoy, with God’s grace, our pastoral visit to the schools! We remember a little girl in an elementary school in the State, who, when asked how many parables of the Lord she would be able to tell us (she had already told us some with charming grace), answered, after closing her eyes and concentrating on herself: “Eighteen”. There is nothing more sublime than the word of God on the lips of children. Do not speak for the sake of speaking, venerable brethren. Speak not for the sake of filling a certain time. Interest the minds and hearts of the faithful. Is it perhaps an exaggeration for us to say that the most useless sermons we have ever heard (and the best paid by the people) are the sermons when “they ring fat”, the sermons called “of bells”? Great popular celebrations, occasion many times of the greatest sins of the year; brilliant processions in which hardly is prayed nor sung; solemn cults (flowers, music and foreign orator). And in these feasts of a full church (since even those who have

not set foot in it for many months usually go), the speaker who comes for hire, with a well-studied discourse (sometimes so deep and twisted that it astonishes the intelligence of the faithful), but more often hollow, high-flown, high-flown, wordy and without any gist, leaves the ear flattered, the mind confused and the heart cold of those who hear him. What a responsibility, venerable brothers, for the Lord to offer us such a beautiful occasion to do good, and to despise it for a foolish applause or for a handful of coins (as we will say later), and the assurance of the next handful, leaving the door open to a new contract. And with these feasts, and with these processions, and with these sermons, and little else, we were having the most Catholic nation in the world!

If God did not open our eyes with a whip, with the blindness, the foolishness and the cruel persecution of a Republic, we would be fresh! Are we exaggerating? Easily yes. The truth is that, after having traveled through Spain and having known the great religious ignorance of our people, we could never understand how we could celebrate our Catholicism so much; and the truth is also, to the great consolation of our love for our country, that for some years now in Spain the sun of religious truth has truly begun to dawn, because the sun of religious truth is shining, without fog, in the elementary, middle and high schools. The clergy has realized its mission “go and teach”. So that the fruit of certain sermons, such as eulogies or discourses on the occasion of the patronal feasts of the towns, may not be disappointed, we impose on all preachers (who must always and without exception be required by Us or by the parish priests) that in the body of the sermon, if the subject matter

lends itself to it, or before or after it, they expose and comment on a point of Christian doctrine with complete clarity. Paterna

Do not hurl thunderbolts, and if one of them leaves your lips, because the glory of God clearly demands it, let the listeners see that all the love of a father's heart goes into it; that you are left weeping because you have to hurt, and that you hurt what is strictly necessary. You well know that you cannot use the pulpit to whip a person; that it would not be courage to do so, but cowardice, and that you cannot even allude to him to cause him discomfort. To turn away a stone of scandal from the sheep, yes, but with all gentleness, with the most exquisite paternity. Make yourselves loved and you will preach effectively. We are men of spirit and we cannot allow ourselves to be carried away by the wind of passion that agitates others. If at the end of your words there remains in the souls of the faithful this expression: "How good it is", what a great sermon you will have preached! Disinterested

Will there be brothers in the priesthood "whose preaching is not directed to sermons of greater profit to souls, but of greater profit to the pocketbook"?

We sincerely believe that one of the great evils that the Church has suffered in Spain has been caused by the professionals of the oratorical profit, and it is only fair that the orator be paid, and that he be paid with decorum. Alms are usually very paltry, compared to the waste of the festivities in costumes, entertainment, gunpowder, flowers. It is bad old. Already said with pride that drummer of Calderon to the friar preacher with whom he met on the

road: “Drummer and friar preacher, is it the same thing?“It is right, we say, that the preacher be rewarded with decorum; but it would be dishonorable if the preacher worked for money; if without appreciating himself he became a beggar of sermons, a flatterer without decorum of authorities, of brotherhood or confraternity boards, to ensure a new requirement: that he flatter or pressure friends or colleagues for it. We desire that the preachers not lack just, generously just fees; but We also desire to remove from them whatever may appear to be a desire for profit, the sale of the word of God by men in whom the priestly spirit is not clearly seen.
Let us finish, venerable brethren. It was a friar, a great preacher and of austere life, who was to give an account to God. His confessor encouraged him in those anguished hours, telling him how much the Lord would reward him for the much and good he had preached. Father, Father,” said the sick man, “I assure you that if God does not remind me of my sermons, I will not say a word to Him. Give us all God, venerable brethren, in life and in death, the consolation of thinking that we have preached to Him and to Him alone.
His grace and peace be with us.

Chapter

God, who arranges all things with measure, number and weight (Sap 11:21), has from all eternity arranged the day and hour of our death, with all the whole of our life and the whole of our life (Sap 11:21).

circumstances that will surround in that instant our transit from time to eternity. The thought of one’s own death is one of the most terrible and horrifying for the one who has no faith or feels in his conscience the weight of enormous responsibilities of which he does not have the courage to repent. But for the Christian who lives in the grace of God there should be no other thought more sweet and consoling. Death, for him, is not symbolized in the horrible skeleton with the scythe in his hand, but in the angel of the Lord with a golden key that opens for him the gates of heaven. St. Paul wished to die to be with Christ (Phil 1:23), and our incomparable Teresa of Jesus burned with such a desire to be untied from the prison of the body that she died of not dying: “Alas, how long is this life, how hard these exile.... U Let us meditate on death from the point of view of the religious Few matters will be more practical and profitable to stimulate our religious life towards the summits of Christian perfection than the consideration that the earthly life escapes us by moments and it is necessary to hurry before the shadows of the night surprise us when “no one can work any more” (Io 9,4). 1*

Benefits and advantages of death thinking

364* The habitual remembrance of the good death. And this pales: because it assures the purity of our heart from earthly things fianza the heart. x.

The thought of death assures the purity of our life, because it is a gift of life, because it is a gift of the soul, because it is a gift of the soul, because it is a gift of the soul, because it is a gift of the soul, and because it is a gift of the soul.

Either by preserving us from falling into sin, or by promptly pulling us out of that abyss if we have had the misfortune to fall into it. a) He who thinks of death does not sin. Sacred Scripture teaches us: “In all your works^ remember your last days and you shall never sin” (Eccl 7 Jp3). This divine affirmation is for us highly stimulating and consoling: -Because of its certainty: it is God who speaks; we cannot hesitate to believe him. -Because of its extension: we are not told that with this remembrance we will avoid this or that sin, but sin in its full extent and universality. 1 Cf. Chaignon, S. I., Kíéditations religieusss vol.3 (Paris 1908) p.72-100, whose doctrine we collect below.

-By the fruits of the victory he promises us. Preserved from sin, we shall also be preserved from every true evil; there is nothing to fear for happiness in this life and in the next. -Because of the ease of the means asked of us to attain such excellent objectives: a simple, but serious and prolonged remembrance of what must inevitably befall us all as the shadows of the night of this life draw near to us.

Two sovereign passions are those that set all the others in motion: pride and sensuality. To them are due most, if not all, of the sins of men. Now the thought of death fetters

them and reduces them to impotence: pride is confused by the idea of the greatness of God and of our own nothingness, of his supreme authority and of our absolute dependence; but the thought of death gives us such decisive proof of both that it needs no demonstration. Before the tomb of a great king there is no choice but to repeat Masillon's phrase in the funeral oration of Louis XIV: "God alone is great!"; and every feeling of rebellion against divine authority vanishes before the memory of his formidable power before which no one resists. On the other hand, nothing more effectively represses sensuality than the memory of the coming dissolution of our body, turned into a sack of worms, and the hope of its future resurrection and immortality. Here are the two strongest passions overcome by the thought of death. b)

The one who thinks about death does not remain in the

It is a terrible burden for a guilty conscience to have to say to itself: "God owes life to no one, least of all to an enemy of His; but I am one, for I have offended Him by trampling on His holy law. I may die at any instant: are sudden deaths so rare? If that great God were to refuse me at this moment the prolongation of a life which I so unworthily abuse to offend Him, if I were to cease to preserve the beating of my heart…, my body would instantly collapse upon the earth, and my soul, where would it go? It horrifies me to think of it, and I wish I could close my eyes to such a frightful prospect". It is impossible, unless one is completely insane, to think seriously about these things without being determined to begin in this world a temporary penance that could become eternal in hell. sin.

The thought of death detaches our heart from earthly things

How much light is contained in these few words: “It will soon be my turn to die”! Nothing is so effective in making us sensitive to the nothingness of earthly things. Death cries out to us more loudly than Solomon: “Vanity of vanities; all is vanity: what profit hath man of all that he laboureth for under the sun?” (Eccl 1.2-3). -Vanity of riches; what are they worth to bring us happiness? How long do the rich possess them? What is left of them when they descend to the grave? -The vanity of honors. Who will take care of us when we are gone from this world? We will be forgotten like the others, even like those who have shone most brightly in this world: “Their memory has perished” (Ps 9:7). Moreover, “what would it matter to be praised where we are no longer if we are tormented where we really are?” (St. Augustine). -Vanity of pleasures. They pass quickly and what do they leave afterwards, besides shame and remorse? The only thing that consoles at the hour of death is a life of sacrifice and mortification. -The only consolation at the hour of death is a life of sacrifice and mortification. God alone is always faithful to his friends: he never abandons them, even if they all abandon him. He who has kept his heart for Him, abandons without pain a life in which he found no other happiness than that of fulfilling His divine will* God will call him, and he will answer joyfully: “Here I am, Lord”. 3.

The habitual thought of death fills the heart with consolation.

It is quite conceivable that the unfaithful and negligent servant should be filled with dread when the coming of his master is announced to him. But the case of one whose hope is supported by a life full of holy works is quite different: death is for him the beginning of an unspeakable happiness. What excites the good religious to multiply his good works is

the thought that he will soon run out of time, and perhaps much sooner than he thinks. From this comes the wise use of all his moments. He often remembers the words of Ecclesiastes: “As much good as you can do, do it cheerfully, for there is neither work, nor industry, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave where you are going” (Eccl 9:10). From there come those full days, in which everything is done for heaven, since everything is done for God. Happy is the servant whom his master finds watching! (Le 12:37). As the prophet Isaiah says, “he shall dwell in a dwelling of peace, in secure dwellings, in a haven of rest” (Is 32:18). Happy

he who prepares himself for death with the habitual thought of death; his life is pure and full of merit, his heart tends unceasingly to God. Whether he dies young or old, full of days, while working or sleeping, after a long illness or suddenly..., he is happy, since his Master puts him in possession of all his goods (cf. Mt 24:47). 2*

The

a warm religious man on his deathbed

365. Bourdaloue, in his magnificent Spiritual Retreat, does not hesitate to compare the death of a religious who has led a lukewarm and negligent life to the death of sinners, which the Holy Spirit has said is “dismal” in the presence of the Lord (cf. Ps 33:22). During his sad and guilty life he has had in his soul nothing but darkness and illusions; but at the approach of death, which is like the dawn of the eternal day, all illusions are dispelled. All around him he will see a multitude of dear objects from which it is necessary to separate; looking back he will see a short and precious life

which he should have filled with holy works, and in which he perceives nothing but useless or sinful deeds; before him, eternity, and at its entrance, a severe tribunal where he is to be judged. Painful separations, bitter memories, overwhelming forecasts? Will it be worthwhile to walk such perilous paths to come to such a desolate end? i. Painful separations. The human heart cannot live without loving someone; if it does not give itself to God, it gives itself to creatures. The lukewarm religious, in perpetual contradiction with himself-like every man who has not the courage to follow his own convictions-though persuaded of the insufficiency of all things on earth to fill his desires, nevertheless seeks in them his happiness, surrendering his own heart to them. Let us see him already “surrounded by the waves of death” (Ps 17:5). He loved his relatives and friends with an intense, but almost entirely natural love, which had nothing, or very little, of the supernatural; it is necessary to leave them forever. He loved the world, from which he had withdrawn outwardly, but without withdrawing his heart from it. He loves its furniture, its books and those thousand little trifles that delight a frivolous spirit. He loves, above all, himself: his body more than his soul. How painful it is for him to have to renounce all that! If the very thought of such a separation is so unpleasant for one who has therefore

If you have a heart for things here below, how much more will your real separation from them be! 2 Bitter memories. He is at the end of life: even the longest life seems short when it is about to end. He remembers all the facilities he had for doing good, the treasures of merit that he could have amassed and that he would now have in his hands, the

multitude of splendid occasions that presented themselves to him for the practice of virtue, the infinity of ordinary and common actions that he could have raised to the rank of the most perfect and heroic by the rectitude and sanctity of his intention, and so forth. All these recollections crowd upon his memory, filling him with anxiety and bitterness. He realizes that he had only a very few years to overcome himself and acquire immense treasures for all eternity, that in exchange for very light and short sufferings he could have obtained ineffable and eternal joys and enjoyments. Then he laments as bitterly as belatedly and uselessly of his guilty sensualities, mad vanities, miserable relaxations.... Truly for the pleasure of dying without pain it is worth the pain of living without pleasure. And if from the good he omitted he goes on to remember the evil he did, he judges now very differently than during the course of life. A thousand doubts which he had dismissed as scruples now seem to him very serious and worthy of consideration; where before he saw only small negligence he now sees real sins. Everything becomes suspicious to him: his confessions, his communions, the principles he forged on essential points, the liberties he allowed himself in defiance of the rule and perhaps to the scandal of the community, the dispensations he asked for and the means he used to obtain them, the attachments of the heart or the unjustified antipathies, his religious duties so often omitted or in which he discovers nothing but routine, irreverence, distraction, *etc.* He had never thought of it in that life of agitation so out of himself that he lived. He had practically forgotten the greatness of God, the gravity and extent of his obligations. Now he thinks of the sacred commitments he made at his baptism, at his religious profession, at his ordination to the priesthood. He remembers the most loving plans that Divine Providence had drawn up for him and the incredible ingratitude with which he had responded to so many benefits; and all this in the bosom of the Church, in a religious house, in a profession

where everything led him to good and in which holiness became so easy for him.... Religious life

3. Overwhelming forecasts. Very soon, very soon, he is going to be assigned his place in one of the two eternities, in which of the two? He questions his own conscience: is it possible that it will be as bitter and painful for him in hell as it will be sweet and very soft for the saints in heaven? No one knows whether he is worthy of love or hatred (Eccl 9:1). But what fills the heart of the good religious with the most legitimate confidence at the hour of death-“I love those who love me” (Prov 8:17); “each will receive according to his works” (Mt 16:27)-becomes a cause of dread for the lukewarm and imperfect religious. With what anxiety he tries to foresee the outcome of the judgment he will suffer in a few moments! What welcome will the adorable Master, whom I have served so badly, give me? What look will he cast on his relaxed disciple, who had nothing but ardor to offend him? What will I be able to answer him when he asks me to give an account of my administration? Ah, if only he could retrace his steps, or if he were granted a little time to do true penance! How great and radical would be the change he would make, with what ardor he would give himself to reparatory penance! But no; his will, dragged towards life by the weight of his desires, is going to crash against the inexorable decree: he must die, and die at once, without further postponement. However, religion, which has consolations for all the sufferings of life, has even greater consolations for the critical moments that precede the entrance into eternity. A priest approaches the dying man and tries to uplift his dejected soul by speaking to him of the divine mercies. He shows him the redemptive cross, applies

it to his lips, places it on his heart. In the name of God, he offers him forgiveness for his sins, whatever their number and enormity, provided he repents. Finally, the religious dies, and his soul appears before the supreme judge while his brothers in religion raise to the Most High the murmur of their prayers....

3*

The death of the good religious

366* One of the most impressive graces that God grants to religious is that of witnessing the death of a holy and exemplary religious. It would seem that in the serenity of his face and in the peace that radiates from his whole being, one can already see the beginning of the eternal happiness that awaits him. Let us take a look at his past, his present and his immediate future.

C.19. The death of the religious l.

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THAT THE GOOD RELIGIOUS MAN SEES IN HIS PAST AT THE TIME OF HIS

OF DEATH,

Undoubtedly, many sorrows of which he now has only a pleasant memory. If the life of the Savior was nothing but a cross and a continuous martyrdom, the same can be said, with due proportion, of the fervent religious, his faithful friend and servant. How many tribulations he must have gone through in pursuit of his divine Master before entering the kingdom of heaven! To what painful trials Divine

Providence subjected him, always attentive to exercise our courage and valor in order to crown our victories later! And to the sorrows that came to him from without, he wanted to add those of his own choice in order to become more and more conformed to the divine exemplar of all the predestined. But here he is at the end of his career: what do all the fatigues and discomforts of the road represent for him now? A source of ineffable joys, How light all those labors seem to him in comparison with the eternal repose that is to follow them! Where are now those overwhelming sorrows, under which nature was on the point of succumbing? Where are those repugnances that it had to overcome, those struggles that it had to wage in order to subject its evil conditions to the fulfillment of duty? Everything has already passed away. The sensual pleasures, the satisfactions of pride, the comforts of life, will also pass…. If he had committed the folly of seeking them, what would they now leave him in his soul but sorrows, bitterness, and cause for despair? How he will congratulate himself on having despised all these sinful satisfactions! How well I did," he will say, "in despising the world, in choosing for myself the cross of Jesus Christ with its apparent rigors and its real sweetness! My soul was a field for me to cultivate: I pulled up the weeds, I sowed the good seeds; the hour has come to reap the fruits of the bountiful harvest." For if sorrows and labors pass away, the merits remain, and, according to the expression of Scripture, "the fruit of righteousness shall be rest and assurance forever" (Is 32:17). The psalmist expressed it beautifully: "Those who sow with weeping reap with joy. Those who bear and scatter the seed go weeping, but they will come rejoicing, bringing their sheaves" (Ps 125:5-6) Holy sufferings, kind tribulations, you who have made us practice so many virtues and have placed in the hands of the good religious the treasure of so many good works, how sweet is your memory for him at the hour of death!

When the trials of religious life instill fear in us or try to intimidate us, let us remember what we will think of them when we leave this world for heaven.

2.

Lo

THAT IT EXPERIENCES AT THE PRESENT TIME.

The testimony of his good conscience, which so often sweetened the bitterness of his life, fills him with consolation in his last moments. He always sought God in the simplicity and uprightness of his heart. Docile to the inspirations of his faith, he applied himself to do nothing and to omit nothing of which he should repent at the hour of death. He undoubtedly committed many faults, for who is the man who does not commit them? “The just man,” says the Scriptures, “falls seven times and rises again” (Prov 24:16). But he was purified in the blood of Christ Jesus. God forgave him, and in proof of his forgiveness he showered him with new favors. Those same faults, the infinite mercy of God turned them to the profit of his soul. Their constant remembrance prompted him to despise himself, to be indulgent to his neighbor, to be patient, to be grateful before the merciful goodness of God. “The good God loved me-he says to himself-despite the fact that I gave him so many reasons to hate and lose me. I would love him less if I had offended him less, because I would not have experienced in such a sensitive way all that there is of compassion and tenderness in his heart, even for the most unworthy. My soul: enter into your rest; give yourself up to thoughts of peace, remembering the benefits of the Lord.” If he realizes that there is some good in his life,

he attributes it all and does honor to divine grace, to which he owes all that he is and has (1 Cor 15:10), He recognizes that, by consuming himself in the Lord’s service, he has done nothing more than fulfill an indispensable duty; therefore he places himself among the useless servants (cf. Le 17:10). But how sweet to him is the voice of his conscience telling him that “the grace of God was not unfruitful in him” (cf. 1 Cor 15:10), and that of his divine Master who says to him: “Well done, good and faithful servant: a few moments more and you will enter forever into the joy of your Lord (cf. Mt 25:21). When I invited you to follow me more closely than my other disciples, I foretold you suffering and tears (lo 16:20), but I also announced to you that sadness would one day be followed by a joy that no one could take away from you (lo 16:22). I come now to fulfill my promise: come out of your prison, dear soul, masterpiece of my grace. Since you have shared in my sufferings, I now associate you forever to my glory.

The sight of the crucifix that he contemplates, the prayers of the Church to sustain him in his last struggles, the presence of his brothers and, above all, the presence of Jesus Christ, who wants to be his viaticum in the passage from time to eternity, what a source of consolation in those moments when true consolations are so lacking! He is at peace, since God has established him firmly in hope (cf. Ps 4:9). 3.

Lo

THAT AWAITS IN THE FUTURE.

Just as the presumption of sinners is often changed into dreadful despair at the hour of death, so the pious timidity

of the righteous is ordinarily replaced by an unshakable confidence. If any disturbance arises in their souls, they are soon reassured by the thought, like St. Teresa, that they will be judged by the best of their friends: “I know very well,” she repeats with St. Paul, “to whom I have entrusted myself, and I am sure that he is able to keep my deposit for that day” (2 Tim 1:12). “I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. The crown of righteousness is ready for me, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day” (2 Tim 4:7-8). How sweet it is to die when one has lived only to love God and to make him loved! Precious death, which puts an end to all the alarms and startles, Can one while living answer for himself by walking on an ever-slippery path? He is so worried about the possibility of a failure to fulfill his obligations! The more one advances in virtue, the more one fears sin. This fear is healthy, but how painful it is for the poor soul who wants to be faithful at all costs! To love God and to be always exposed to the misfortune of offending and losing Him! Only a heart fully in love with God can understand this sorrow (St. Augustine). But death comes and destroys at one stroke sin, the causes and effects of sin. It comes to close for the faithful soul a past full of bitterness and dangers and opens for it the most beautiful and rapturous horizon: an eternity of triumphs and delights in which sin will be impossible: “I shall be satisfied when I behold your face in glory” (cf. Ps 16:15). The desire to die like the saints should encourage us to live like the saints.

4.

Consideration of one’s own death

367. But the Holy Spirit has linked the priceless advantage of never sinning to the memory and consideration of our own death: “Remember your last days and you will never sin” (Eccl 7:40). Let us, then, apply our senses in anticipation to the formidable scene of our own death, 1, Sight. Let us contemplate our cell, illuminated only by a faint glow. “Let us contemplate our furniture, more or less in conformity with religious poverty; our books, where we should have learned the science of perfection; the crucifix, the most sublime of all books… which we read above all at this moment. What do all these things remind us of? Probably, a life little conformed to the Model that was presented to us on Calvary, but God still wants to forgive everything in exchange for our repentance. Let us contemplate our bed: it is the altar on which we are going to offer our last sacrifice, Let us contemplate the people who assist and surround us: some weep, others seem insensitive. Some of them move away after having said goodbye to us; others come to receive our last farewell. They are the brothers or sisters who visit us and for whom our state holds such a serious teaching; the director of our conscience, who directs our thoughts towards eternity and suggests pious affections.… Let us contemplate our guardian angel, who redoubles his charitable services, defends us, encourages us, excites us to take advantage of those last moments, each of which can bring us an increase of eternal happiness. We are still on the road, we are still travelers, but in a moment we will be no more. Let us contemplate, finally, the devil, who redoubles his fury to lose us, knowing that very soon he will no longer have any power over us. 2. The ear. Let us listen to the monotonous ticking of the clock’s pendulum. Each of its movements tells us that it is

Cyp.

We are one second closer to the judgment seat of God and eternity. Let us listen to the words that are said in low voices around us; the sound of our weary breathing, the dying rattle, the sound of the bells announcing our agony, the prayers that are recited with an emotional voice beside us.... What we have so often asked for other dying people, they now ask for us: “Holy Mary, pray for him; saints of God, intercede for him”. Let us listen and meditate well on the soul’s recommendation, so consoling for the good servant of Jesus Christ and for his faithful spouse: “Depart from this world, Christian soul”. Happy is he who has known how to justify this beautiful name! Your earthly journey is ended, the world is ended for you. “I commend you to almighty God.” Terrible words for him who sees in his life nothing but sins without penitence: he is handed over to the justice of an all-powerful and offended Lord. But how sweet these same words are for the fervent religious! How he loves to hear the Church on earth call to the aid of the Church in heaven! 3. Taste. Let us imagine tasting all the bitterness that the lukewarm and imperfect religious experiences in these supreme battles of nature, when the sufferings of the frightened soul come to join the material flattening of the body. And also, on the contrary, all that there is of happiness and joy in the peace that procures for the good religious the memory of a life spent in loving Jesus Christ and making him loved. Let us enjoy the sadness, sorrow, anguish and bitterness of the first, and the calm, joy, peace and hope of the second. 4. Touch. Let us imagine that we take in our feeble hands the crucifix that is presented to us; that we apply it to our lips; that we touch our own body, from which life is passing away and which in a few moments will be nothing but a corpse; that we place our hand under our arms, weakened by sickness and which are beginning to stiffen; on our face, wet with cold sweat; on our heart, which

in a few moments will cease to beat. We have seen many of our relatives and friends in this situation; they will see us in the not too distant future. It is worthwhile for us today, for our own benefit and in the interest of our own eternity, to make to ourselves the salutary reflections which our agony will soon inspire in those who will soon be

witnesses to it. Let us take great advantage of this word pronounced by the mercy of the Lord as much as by His justice: You will die. What does it matter that death is necessary, if by the disposition of our heart we make it voluntary and infinitely meritorious? Let us accept it, then, with all the circumstances that Divine Providence wills for us. 2. In spite of all the repugnances of nature, I consent to receive death at your hand, and I freely submit to the decree which condemns me to it. I submit as a rational creature: Are you not the lord and master of all things? He who has made a vessel of clay, may he not dispose of it as he pleases? I submit myself also as a sinner: I am happy to suffer this penance that You Yourself have imposed on me. Punish the guilty, O Lord, but forgive his repentant heart. I submit, finally, as a Christian and a religious; my Savior, my adorable Spouse has died; I want to die too; He has died for me, and I want to die for Him. The lord, the king, the God has died for his servant, for his subject, for his creature; the servant and the slave cannot but congratulate himself, in being able, dying, to obey his lord, to please his king, to resemble his God. Let death come. My God, since it alone can free me from the danger of offending you and because it provides me with the means of offering you the most complete sacrifice of myself. In dying I will render a magnificent homage to your eternal life, and my bones,

humiliated in the tomb, will celebrate in their own way your infinite greatness: “Omnia ossa mea dicent: Domine, quis similis tibi ? (Ps 34:10).

5.

Preparation for death

Let us imagine that our guardian angel is telling us clearly within ourselves what the prophet Isaiah once said to Hezekiah: “Dispose of your house, for you will die; you will not be healed” (1 Cor. 38:1). Let us dispose ourselves to do now what we will not have time to do then. a)

Let’s do now what we may not be able to do at the hour of death

When the nearness of our end is communicated to us, the first thing that will present itself to our spirit will be the image of our life as it has actually been. We shall see the disorder of it in a very different light from that in which we now view it. In a conduct which perhaps was praised for its outward regularity, it may be that my conscience will not

It is known that St. Pius X granted a plenary indulgence for the hour of death to all those who, having confessed, received communion and prayed for the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff, recited this prayer: “My Lord and my God, I now accept as coming from your hand whatever kind of death you wish to give me, with all its anguish, pains and sorrows*.

I will discover nothing but self-seeking and a spirit of immortification. I will distrust many things that until then had left me at ease. Those secret resentments that I harbored within me, had they not, perhaps, extinguished charity in my heart? That diligence in procuring for me certain objects without which I could have got along very well, that pain in getting rid of them, did they not hurt my vow of poverty? Will I be sure of my penances? Will I not find, perhaps, a heap of hasty confessions, of decisions made without sufficient reflection, which will then cause me lively alarm? What a disturbance this sight must cause to a religious who has only a few hours to prepare to die, and even more so to a religious who feels assailed by an almost sudden death and without even being able to go to confession! He recognizes then the need to go back over his whole life, but how to do it? The time is lacking, the peace of mind is lacking, everything is lacking to do such a serious thing well. Therefore, if we take our own salvation seriously, it is necessary that we put our conscience in such a state as soon as possible that it has nothing important to reproach itself in those terrible moments: neither negligence in the examination, nor lack of sincerity in the pain, nor laxity in the penance. For two or three days, if possible, let us take a few moments to excite ourselves to true contrition, asking for it with great fervor. Then let us go to confession. Let us arrange our temporal affairs, so that, when death approaches, we will not have to occupy ourselves with anything foreign to the interests of our soul. The last hours of life are so precious! They give us so much facility to soften and shorten the pains of purgatory and to beautify our crown! It is the time of the richest harvest for him who has already taken all his measures and has reserved these last hours for himself, Since it is announced to him that he is going to die, he can say with peace of mind: My God, I have only a few hours left to believe in You, to hope in You, to suffer for You. Death will take away from me the possibility of

honoring You and loving You freely and meritoriously; at least, I want to apply myself until the last moment to honoring You and loving You with all my strength. My soul: make the most of the time you have left. Love God, if possible, at every moment, as much as all the saints loved Him in the whole course of their lives. Do in twenty-four hours more than you have done in sixty or seventy years. Endure the

the last discomforts of illness with the constancy of the martyrs. He accepts death at the hands of God with complete resignation and even with joy. “I rejoiced when they said to me, Let us go to the house of the Lord” (Ps 121:1). “I wish I had a thousand lives to offer you with all my heart. You ask me for the only one you have given me: yes. My God, I give it back to you willingly. I consent to be stripped of all that I loved on earth, and even of this body which I loved too much. I submit to the law that will deliver it to the worms and reduce it to dust. As for my sufferings, they are, alas, too small and will be too short, since they are the last proof I can give you of my love and my desire to please you. Begging you to have pity on me, according to your great mercy, I accept the sorrows of the other life to satisfy your justice: I wish I had not deserved them, refraining from offending you. I thank you for all the good you have done me, especially for the priceless gift of faith. I firmly believe all that your Church teaches and hope for all that it promises. It weighs heavily on me that I have served the best of all lords so badly; but all my crimes and sins will not shake or weaken my confidence, because it rests solely on the infinite merits of my Savior. This is what fills me with joy in the midst of my painful memories: Jesus Christ

belongs to me, he is mine; you gave him to me, my God, and he gave himself to me: “He loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20). His life, his death, his penance, his virtues: this is all that I offer you to make up for all that I lack.

But in order to have these sentiments at the gates of eternity, it is necessary to practice them frequently during life. It is very wise and opportune, then, the practice of the good religious to dedicate every month a day of retreat as a preparation for death, renewing the acts that we have just indicated with the same fervor as if they should expire a moment later. b)

Let’s do now what we will necessarily have to do at the hour of death

Let us renounce now, voluntarily and with great merit, all that we will then have to renounce necessarily and without merit. What a pity if we force God to take from us by force what He asks of us now with so much goodness, what He would like to possess voluntarily surrendered for our love! Happy the religious soul that no longer has anything to sacrifice when the sovereign judge calls it! It has already died to all false goods, to all disordered affections; everything is in order, everything is ready. “How much freedom, how much peace, how much sweetness is enclosed in a death so wisely foreseen and so saintly expected!

When one is seriously determined to undertake the great work of his anticipated spiritual death, he should not be so much concerned with detaching himself from external goods-although this too is necessary-as with destroying or straightening out his disordered appetites and evil

inclinations. One can die to the actual possession of pleasures, honors and riches without yet dying entirely to oneself. Prayer, attention to the presence of God, mortification of the senses, the cross of Jesus Christ tightly embraced, are the most effective means to reach this mystical death “all living, all vivifying in the life of Our Lord” (St. Francis de Sales). Let us begin, then, more generously than we have done so far, to practice this total evangelical detachment. It consists, principally, in treating the body with less delicacy as regards food and rest; in loving retirement and solitude; in suffering with more patience the absence of loved ones; in frequently offering to God what we love with greater intensity, begging him to dispose of it according to his divine good pleasure; in submitting, finally, not only with resignation, but with true joy, to the orders of Providence, when he allows us to be tested by contradictions, illnesses and humiliations. In this way we put ourselves in the position of being able to exclaim with the Apostle: Quotidie morior: every day I die a little (I Cor 15:31); not only because my death is approaching at every moment, but because every day I feel my affection for the life of this world weakening in me; I no longer have so much interest in seeking the esteem of creatures, nor so much fear of incurring their censure or disdain. “What does it matter, my daughters,” said St. Teresa of Jesus to her nuns, “what does it matter to have the whole world for our enemy, if we have the happiness of having God Himself for our friend?” My heart is detached from all things here below, and my soul begins in a certain way to separate itself from my body. This was the life of all the true and faithful disciples of Jesus Christ: a life of death, a continual sacrifice. When they appeared before Him, they were empty of everything, filled only with His holy love. c)

Let us now do what we would certainly like to have done at the hour of death.

One of the greatest sorrows of the dying is to see the bad use he made of his own life. He realizes then, very clearly, that God had given it to him exclusively to praise Him and to merit heaven. If he has neglected this em

The essential plea of all his moments, he understands with horror the meaning of those words of the Gospel addressed to the bad steward: “Give me an account of your stewardship, for you will no longer be able to continue as steward” (Le 16:2)^ “You will no longer have any more graces, any more talents to make them bear fruit. As long as your life lasted, you were able to treasure up merits continually, but from now on you will no longer be able to do so. Those you have acquired up to now, those you will have in eternity, without being able to add a single one more. Up to here your arms remained inactive, henceforth they will remain chained to acquire new merits”. What repentance and what bitterness! When I appear before God, there will appear with me many fervent Christians who sanctified themselves in the world, many religious saints who filled their days with holy works. They will offer to Jesus Christ their mortifications, their labors, the good works of all their moments? And I, what will I be able to offer, will I dare to present to him my prayers, so cold and distracted; my piety, so languid and sickly; my penances, so comfortable; my obedience, so imperfect? It is worthwhile to warn ourselves now against that misfortune, all the more painful because it will be irreparable. Let us live now, and let us not cease to live, as then we would so ardently wish to have lived. We shall never do so much good that we shall not wish to have done so much more at the hour of death. Let us carefully regulate and order the time that remains to us. Let us make

strong resolutions so that, when it is necessary to die, we may remember the present moment as the one that inaugurated for us an entirely new life. Let us determine the day which we will dedicate each month to the retreat, and on which we will do, with all possible fervor, the exercise of preparation for death. Supplications for a good death 369.

My Lord Jesus Christ, God of goodness, Father of mercy, I come before You with a humiliated and contrite heart, and I entrust to You my last hour and what awaits me after it. When my feet, losing their movement, warn me that my career in this world is near its end, merciful Jesus, have mercy on me. When my hands, trembling and weakened, can no longer grasp the crucifix and, in spite of myself, let it fall on the bed of my pain, merciful Jesus, have pity on me.

3 For the convenience of our readers, we are putting below the moving “Pleas for a good death”, so dear to the hearts of pious people.

When my eyes, glazed and unglued by the terror of imminent death, fix their languid and dying gaze on You, merciful Jesus, have mercy on me. When my lips, cold and convulsed, utter for the last time your adorable name, merciful Jesus, have pity on me. When my face, pale and bruised, causes pity and terror to the bystanders, and my hair, bathed with the sweat of death, bristling on my head, announces that my end is near, merciful Jesus, have pity on me. When my ears, about to close forever to the conversations of men, open to hear from your mouth the irrevocable sentence that will fix my fate for all eternity, merciful Jesus, have pity on me. When my imagination,

agitated by horrendous phantasms, causes me mortal anguish, and my spirit, disturbed with the fear of your justice, by the memory of my iniquities, struggles with the infernal enemy, who would like to take away my hope in your mercy and precipitate me into the horrors of despair, merciful Jesus, have pity on me. When my heart, weak and oppressed by the pain of sickness, is overwhelmed by the fear of death, wearied and worn out by the efforts made against the enemies of my salvation, merciful Jesus, have mercy on me. When I shed my last tears, symptoms of my destruction, receive them, O Lord, as a sacrifice of atonement, that I may die as a victim of penance, and in that terrible moment, merciful Jesus, have mercy on me. When my relatives and friends, gathered around me, tremble at the sight of me and commend me to You, merciful Jesus, have mercy on me When, having lost the use of my senses, the whole world disappears from my sight and I groan in the anguish of the last agony and the anxieties of death, merciful Jesus, have mercy on me. When the last sighs of my heart force the soul to leave the body, accept them, Lord, as children of a holy impatience to come to You, and then, merciful Jesus, have compassion on me. When my soul departs forever from this world, leaving the body pale, cold and lifeless, accept the destruction of it as a homage that I render to your divine Majesty, and at that hour, merciful Jesus, have compassion on me. Finally, when my soul appears before you and sees for the first time the splendor of your majesty, do not cast it from your presence; deign to receive me into the bosom of your mercy so that I may sing your praises eternally; and then, now and always, merciful Jesus, have compassion on me. Prayer

O my God, who in condemning us to death have hidden from us its moment and hour, grant that, living in righteousness and holiness all the days of my life, I may merit to depart from this world in your holy love. Through the merits of our

Lord Jesus Christ, who with you lives and reigns in the unity of the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

Chapter 20

ETERNAL REWARD We want to conclude our work by taking a quick look at the indescribable happiness that awaits us up there in heaven, if we are faithful until death to the sacred commitments of our baptism and our religious profession. We will divide this chapter into two parts. In the first, we will take up the beautiful meditation of St. Alphonsus Liguori in one of his most celebrated works on the glory of paradise 1. In the second, dedicated more especially to religious, we will yield the floor to the most pious Father Chaignon 1 2, whom we have already quoted more than once. We believe we are rendering our readers a real service by offering them these two masterpieces on the sublime happiness of heaven.

1* 370.

a) b) c)

The paradise of the Christian soul

We will divide our consideration into three fundamental points: Joy of a soul on entering heaven. In heaven all is joy and contentment. In heaven God is loved for all eternity. a)

Joy of a soul on entering heaven

Let us try, while we live on earth, to bear with patience the afflictions of this life, offering them to God in union with the labors that Jesus Christ suffered for our love, and let us sustain our spirit with the hope of paradise. The day will come when these anxieties, pains, fears and persecutions will be over; and if we succeed in being saved, they will be for us a source of eternal joy and contentment in the

kingdom of the blessed. This is what the Lord assures us, saying through St. John: Your sorrow will be turned into joy (John 16:20). Let us meditate, then, today on the glory of paradise. What can we say about heaven, if not even the most enlightened saints with heavenly light have been able to give us an understanding of the delights that God has prepared for his faithful servants? All that David knew how to tell us was that paradise is an infinitely desirable good. “How beautiful,” he exclaims, “are your tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!” (Ps 83:2). And you, St. Paul, who had the great fortune of being caught up to the third heaven, tell us, what did you see there? 1 Cf. St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori, Preparation for Death (Madrid, 1943), consideration 29, “Paradise. 2 Cf. P. Chaicnon, S. t, Méditations religieuses V0L3 (Paris 1908) p.281-287.

Apostle-it cannot be explained. The delights of paradise are so great, “they are such mysterious things that it is not lawful for a man to explain them” (2 Cor 12:4), unless he enjoys them. Of them alone can I tell you,” continues the Apostle, “that neither eye has seen nor ear heard, nor has any man thought what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Cor 2:9). No, no man on earth has ever seen, heard, or understood the beauty, the harmony, the joy that God has prepared for those who love him. To tell the truth, we are not able to comprehend the goods of paradise, because we have no other idea than that which the goods of the world offer us. If by wonder a horse could reason and knew that his owner, to celebrate his wedding, was preparing a splendid banquet, he would imagine that the most precious dishes of the great feast would be good straw, good oats and good barley, because the horse knows no other food. How

pleasant it is to contemplate the star-studded sky on a peaceful summer night! How pleasant it is on a beautiful spring day to stroll along the shores of a lake and see through its calm waters the rocks covered with greenery and the fish that swim without respite or rest! How delightful is a garden where flowers and fruits abound, where the fountains give us with their crystalline waters, where the little birds of a thousand painted colors, flying from branch to branch, recreate us with their unlearned melodies! This is enchanting," they exclaim, "this is paradise. But what, is this nothing but paradise? Ah, no, there are other goods, another is the glory of heaven. To glimpse something of what heaven is, it is enough to remember that there lives and dwells an omnipotent God, who puts all his eagerness to intoxicate the souls he loves with unspeakable delights. St. Bernard asks, "Do you want to know what paradise is? Well, in it you will find nothing to displease you, and you will have everything that pleases you". Oh my God, what will the soul think when it enters that blissful kingdom? Let us imagine a young man or a maiden who has consecrated his whole life to the service and love of Jesus Christ. She has just died, she leaves this vale of tears and appears before the tribunal of Christ: the supreme Judge embraces her lovingly and declares that she is saved. The guardian angel comes out to meet her and congratulates her, and she hastens to thank him for the protection he has given her: "Come, come, beautiful soul," the angel will reply, "rejoice, for you are saved;

Come and contemplate the face of your Lord". The soul, at last, passes through the clouds, soars above the stars and enters heaven. O my God, what will she say as she sets her

virginal plant for the first time in that homeland of the blessed and as she spreads her first glance over that city of delights? Angels and saints will meet her, and in the transports of the purest joy they will welcome her; what a joy to meet her relatives and friends who will already be in paradise; what a consolation to see her patron saints! The holy soul will want to prostrate herself at their feet to venerate them; but the saints, lifting her up, will say to her: “Beware of doing so, for, like you, we too are servants” (cf. Rev 19:10). Then they will lead her to kiss the feet of Mary, who is the Queen of Paradise. Who can tell us the unspeakable joy that the soul will experience on contemplating for the first time the Mother of God, who has helped it so much to be saved? Then the blissful soul will see the graces that Mary has granted it. And after having embraced her with ineffable tenderness, the exalted Queen herself will lead her into the presence of Jesus Christ, who will receive her as his bride, saying to her: “Come from Lebanon, my spouse, come, and you will be crowned” (Cant 4:8). Rejoice, my bride; tears, sorrows and fears are over; receive the eternal crown that I have won for you with my blood. Finally, Jesus Christ, by himself, will lead her to receive the blessing of his Eternal Father, who, holding her close to his breast, will bless her saying: “Enter into the joy of your Lord” (Mt 25:21). And he will make her happy with the same beatitude that he enjoys. b)

In heaven all is joy and contentment

After the soul has entered into the joy of the Lord, it will be free from all affliction. “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new’” (Rev 21:4). In heaven there is no sickness, poverty or discomfort; there the

transition from day to night, from heat to cold is unknown; there there is only one eternal and unchanging day, a continuous spring, always pleasant and always delightful; there envy and persecution are unknown; in that kingdom of love everyone loves each other tenderly and each one enjoys the good of the other as if it were his own; there are no fears, because the soul, confirmed in grace, cannot sin or lose God. “Behold, I make all things new.” In heaven all things

is new, everything satisfies, everything consoles. The eye will delight in contemplating that city of “perfect and inimitable beauty” (Lam 2:15). What an enchanting spectacle it would be for us to visit a city whose streets were paved with crystal, and whose palaces, of solid silver, were covered with plates of the purest gold, and whose walls were hung with garlands of flowers. But far more beautiful and enchanting is the city of paradise: what it will be to see all the inhabitants of heaven clothed in robes of regal purple, for they are all kings, according to the expression of St. Augustine! What it will be to contemplate the Virgin Mary, who alone is more beautiful than all paradise! What it will be, above all, to see the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, the Spouse of our souls, if St. Teresa was amazed at such beauty at the mere sight of a hand of the divine Redeemer! The sense of smell will be fully satiated with the richest perfumes, but the perfumes of paradise, and the ear will be eternally recreated with heavenly melodies. If St. Francis of Assisi thought he died of pure joy on hearing one day some notes torn from a violin by the hands of an angel, what will it be like to hear the angels and saints sing in chorus the praises of God? What will it be like to hear Mary praising

God? “The voice of Mary in heaven,” says St. Francis de Sales, “will be like the song of the nightingale in the forest, which surpasses the twittering of all the little birds that chirp in the bower” (Ps 83:5). In a word: in heaven there will be all the delights that can be desired. But all these delights together constitute only the least part of the goods of glory. God is the true joy of paradise, the true and supreme good. “All that we hope for,” says St. Augustine, “is enclosed in this one word: God. The reward that God promises to his own does not consist only in enjoying the beauty, the harmonies and the other ineffable delights of that fortunate city; the principal reward is God himself, that is, to love him and contemplate him face to face. “I will be your reward, exceeding great” (Gen 15:1). St. Augustine says that if God were to let the damned see his face, hell would be changed in a moment into a delightful paradise. And the saint adds that, if the soul that leaves this world were given the choice between seeing God and living buried in the flames of hell, or not seeing him and remaining free from those torments, it would choose the pains of hell for the sake of seeing God. While we live in this exile it is not possible for us to understand what it means to love God and see Him face to face. Something, however, we can trace back to what we know of the

divine love. It has so many charms and attractions, that even in this life it manages to raise above the earth not only souls, but also the bodies of the saints. St. Philip Neri was raised in ecstasy, carrying with him the stool to which he had clung. St. Peter of Alcantara, seized by a violent ecstasy, grabbed hold of a tree and, rising from the ground, pulled it up by the roots. We know that the holy martyrs, because of

the sweetness of divine love, felt true joy in the midst of the most exquisite torments. While St. Vincent was horribly tormented, he spoke in such a way," says St. Augustine, "that it seemed that one was the one who suffered and the other the one who spoke. St. Lawrence, stretched out on the fire grates, insulted the tyrant by saying to him: Turn me over to the other side and eat, because, as St. Augustine himself says, St. Lawrence, inflamed in the fire of divine love, did not feel the fire of the flames. What ineffable sweetness does not the sinner experience in this world when he sheds tears for his sins! "If it is so sweet to weep for you, my God," exclaims St. Bernard, "what will it be to rejoice in you?" What softness does not a soul experience when, illumined by a ray of heavenly light, it discovers the divine goodness, the mercy used with it, and the love that Jesus Christ has had for it! The soul then feels itself faint and consumed with love. And yet, while we live in this world, we do not see God as he is in himself, but in shadows, as St. Paul says. "Now we see God as in a mirror and as an enigma, but later we will see him face to face (cf. I Cor 13:12). At present we have a blindfold over our eyes, and God hides behind the veils of faith and does not let himself be seen from us; but what will it be when the blindfold falls from our eyes and the veil is drawn aside and we see God face to face? Then we will know how beautiful God is and how great, how just, how perfect, how kind and how loving. c)

In heaven God is loved for all eternity

The sorrows that most torment in this life "the souls that love God are the desolations and the fear of not loving Him and of not being loved by Him. "Man does not know whether he is worthy of love or hate" (Eccl 9:1). But in heaven the soul is sure that it loves God and that it is loved by Him; it sees itself blissfully lost in the love of its Lord and that He holds it lovingly in His embrace, as His beloved daughter,

and it knows that this bond of love will never be broken for all eternity. These holy flames will increase with the very high knowledge that we will then have of the love that moved God to

to become man and die for us and to institute the Blessed Sacrament, giving herself as food to the vile worms of the earth. At the same time she will see clearly all the graces that God has given her to free her from so many temptations and dangers of losing herself. Then she will also see that the tribulations, illnesses, persecutions, reverses of fortune, which she called misfortunes and punishments of God, were demonstrations of love and marvelous traces of Divine Providence to take her to heaven. She will know in a special way the patience with which God tolerated so many sins and the mercies He lavished on her, giving her so many lights and calling her with such loving appeals. She will see, finally, from those inaccessible heights, countless souls submerged in hell for fewer sins than hers, while she is safe and possesses God, with the assurance of not losing this supreme Good eternally. The blessed will enjoy that ineffable bliss always and for all eternity, and at every moment this happiness will be new, as if each moment were the first in which he began to enjoy it. She will always be desiring this happiness and will always have it; always satisfied and always eager; and always eager and always fulfilled in her desires; yes, because desiring in heaven brings with it no fear, nor does possession cause tedium, In a word: just as the damned are vessels filled with the wrath of God, the blessed are vessels that are overflowing with contentment, so that they can desire nothing else. St. Teresa says that even in this world, when God introduces a soul into the

cellar of wine, that is, into the chamber of his divine love, it is so intoxicated that it loses all affection for the things of earth. But, on crossing the threshold of heaven, then the blessed, as David says, “will be intoxicated with the abundance of your house” (Ps 35:9). Then the soul, seeing God without veils and embracing the supreme Good, will be intoxicated with love, will be blissfully lost in God; that is, it will forget itself and will think only of loving, praising and blessing the infinite Good that it possesses. When the cross of life falls upon us with all its weight, let us encourage ourselves to bear it with patience, placing our hope in paradise. When Abbot Zosimo asked St. Maria Egipciaca, at the end of her life, who had given her the courage to live alone in the desert for so many years, the penitent saint answered: “The hope of paradise”. When St. Philip Neri was offered the cardinal’s purple, he threw up in the air the capelet, exclaiming: “Heaven, heaven, give me heaven, give me heaven”.

heaven”. When Friar Gil, a Franciscan friar, heard the name of paradise,* he felt so much joy that he rose ecstatic in the air. Let us raise our eyes to heaven, and to console ourselves, let us sigh and say: “To heaven, to heaven!” Let us not forget that, if we are faithful to God, there will come a day when all our labors, miseries and fears will be over and we will be admitted to the land of the blessed, where we will enjoy happiness fulfilled as long as God is God. There the saints already await us, Mary Most Holy awaits us, and Jesus also awaits us with the crown in his hand to gird our temples as kings of that everlasting kingdom.

2*

Religious in heaven

371. Three considerations will let us know something of the ineffable happiness that awaits the good religious in heaven: he will never suffer any evil, there will be no good left to desire, and he will never fear to lose the indescribable happiness he enjoys. a)

You will never suffer any harm

It is true that, before receiving the crown, the religious who has enlisted under the banner of perfection has had to endure and fight many battles; it has been necessary for him to live a life full of sacrifices and tribulations. “By many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). But here he is at the end of his trials. Now he can exclaim with the psalmist: “Calamity shall not come upon thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy tent” (Ps 90:10). The sufferings of body, heart and soul are over forever. No more sufferings of the body. In this earthly life they are so numerous, they assail us in so many ways, that our existence here below is less a life than a prolonged death. But they will all end forever up there. No suffering of the heart: sadness, bitter disappointments, sometimes hidden under an appearance of prosperity that causes envy…. As soon as one wound heals, new ones open up, tearing the poor human heart apart. All will end forever in heaven. No suffering of the soul: darkness, heaviness of spirit, attraction towards evil, impotence or weakness towards good, interior anguish, which made more than one imitator of Jesus exclaim: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*) (Mt 27:46).

How true it is that our present state offers no one anything but vanity, and affliction of spirit! (cf. Eccl.

1,14). But Sacred Scripture presents us with the dazzling panorama of heaven: “I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had disappeared, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God’s side, arrayed like a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men; and he will set up his tabernacle among them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them. And he shall wipe away the tears from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor travail: for all these things are passed away. And he who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new’” (Rev 21:1-5).

In this world, the life of the good religious or of the faithful spouse of Christ slips away in tears. But it will be the hand of God himself who will wipe them from his face and extinguish forever the fountain from which they flow. Let them console themselves in the expectation of this great event, in which faith teaches us that all our ills will have passed away forever like a dream and can never return. In heaven, Jesus Christ preserves the scars of his wounds: a most sweet and glorious memory. Lawrence and the other martyrs still perceive the dreadful instrument of his torture. All the victors of the world and of hell remember the various scenes of their combats: it is a part of their reward. Just as a man returned to freedom remembers with satisfaction the sorrows of his captivity, or as the sailor escaped shipwreck remembers the terrible dangers he passed through, so we in heaven will retain of past sufferings only a memory full of

enchantment, and of all the dangers that beset us, only a sweet and absolute security. b)

No good to be desired

Heaven is the fulfillment and satiation of all desires. The whole man, spiritual and bodily, will find there the most complete, absolute and total happiness. This material body, now so easily crushed by suffering, and in which Christian and religious mortification must dominate its gross appetites, reformed then on the model of the glorious body of Jesus Christ, will have the radiance of the sun, the agility of the wind, the subtlety and impassibility of the angels. But the greater part of the eternal delights will be for the soul, because it is to the soul that the merit of the good actions practiced in exile properly belongs.

I. With what glory will our memory flood us then when it reminds us of the graces of God made fruitful, the temptations overcome, the evil avoided, the virtues practiced! How sweet it will be for us to move with our thoughts in the midst of the community we have built up by our examples of humility, patience, regularity; in the midst of the ignorant we have instructed, of the poor or sick we have visited and assisted! Holy tribulations, glorious scorns, happy sufferings! Without them it is possible that we would have been lost forever. They purified and detached us from the world and from ourselves; they saved us. They saved us. Where would we be at this moment if we had succumbed to the temptations that assailed us or resisted the good thoughts that our angel inspired in us? 2.0 Our intelligence will see God as he is in himself; sicuti est (i Io 3,2). “Now we

see through a mirror and darkly; then we shall see face to face. At present I know only in part; then I shall know as I am known" (1 Cor 13:12). Created to know the truth, when we glimpse it on earth it makes us shudder with joy. Let us remember the pleasure experienced by an Archimedes, a Newton, a St. Thomas when they discovered some new mystery of science; a St. Teresa, a Xavier, during their ecstasies. If a faint ray of truth, escaped through clouds so dense, can cause such delightful transports to a soul still locked in the prison of the corruptible body, what will it be when the veil of the flesh has been torn and the soul is introduced into the eternal clarity, more dazzling than the sun, and directly contemplates God as He is in Himself? Then it will be when, embracing at a single glance the admirable whole of the Lord's designs and comprehending the full extent and scope of his love for man, we will penetrate into the depths of these mysteries which now exercise our faith. We will pass from admiration to admiration, from rapture to rapture, and each moment bringing us new knowledge will also bring us an increase of happiness. Then," says St. Augustine, "we shall praise God: laudabimus. Of what shall we praise Him? Of Himself; of His wisdom, deeper than the depths; of His justice, higher than the mountains; of all His ineffable perfections, gathered, as it were, in His infinite holiness: Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus. We will bless him for everything: for having made us men, Christians, religious and, above all, saints. We will bless him particularly for the humiliations and sufferings he made us.

We will then see how much love and tenderness were enclosed in those merciful blows with which such a good Father wounded us, and we will see how much love and

tenderness were enclosed in those merciful blows with which such a good Father wounded us. Then we will see how much love and tenderness were enclosed in those merciful blows with which such a good Father wounded us. Everything, including our miseries, our weaknesses, our temptations and even, in a certain sense, our sins, which revealed his patience and goodness towards us. Everything will be a reason for us to praise and bless him. 3.0 But what are all these joys of the mind compared to those of the heart? Amafñmus, we shall love. The will will possess God with a love of fruition, and in God it will possess every good. Love is the life and happiness of the human heart, so much happier in its love as the object it loves is more perfect and possesses it more perfectly. Who can tell us how to love in heaven? A little true love of God in this valley of tears already causes so much happiness! What did Xavier experience when he cried out: “Enough, Lord, enough; I cannot resist this pleasure”? They were simply a few drops of heaven falling on his soul. But this is not how we will love in heaven, this is not how we will be loved. God gives himself entirely to his faithful servant. He applies to him to make him happy all his beauty, all his charms, all his power, all his infinite perfections. “Enter into my joy and my glory,” he will say to his chosen ones, “for my glory and joy cannot enter into you; partake of my infinite happiness, set no limits to your desires, be happy with my own happiness. Always satiated and always greedy, desire and possess, possess and desire always”. What will the soul become in this ocean of delights? What emotions, what continuity in the transports and ecstasies of love! How will its gratitude burst forth in the harmony and fire of its songs! But if this will be the fate of the last of the elect, what will be the fate of a religious person who, with the help of her vows and her rules, has succeeded in rising to eminent sanctity? c)

No change to fear

The joys of earth last but a moment* but “the kingdom of Jesus Christ will never end” (Le 1:33), and the throne of his elect is as immutable as his own. God has promised: “The righteous live forever, and their reward is in the Lord, and their care is in the Most High” (Sap 5:15)-The joys of heaven are eternal, they will never end.

P.llL Ascetic-mythical aspect of religious life

What ineffable thoughts are those of the elect! I suffer nothing and I will never suffer anything; I feel flooded with immense happiness and I will never cease to enjoy it. You love me, my God, and I love you; you will love me and I will always love you; I am all yours and you are all mine, and no one can ever separate us from each other. I am absolutely sure and certain*, neither life, nor death, nor what is higher nor deeper, neither present nor future things can ever take away or diminish my happiness. O beautiful day of eternity, serene day, which night will never darken and which always illuminates the sovereign Truth and the supreme Beauty! It is very true: “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the mind of man, what God hath prepared for them that love him” (I Cor. 2:9). What are we to conclude from all this? That there is nothing that we should not sacrifice in order to obtain this immensity, this eternity of happiness. Let us listen to the Savior, who tells us in the book of the Imitation: “Son, do not be discouraged by the labors you have undertaken for my sake, nor be troubled by tribulations: my promises should strengthen you and comfort you in everything that happens….. Do what you do, work faithfully in my vineyard. I myself will be your reward. Write, read, sing, sigh, be silent, pray, suffer manfully the adversities: eternal life deserves these and even greater combats and labors… Oh if you could see the eternal crowns of the saints in heaven and how much glory those who were despised in the world now enjoy…. Lift up, then, your eyes to

heaven: see that I, and with me all the saints who in this world had to suffer great combats, now rejoice and enjoy a most pure joy, an unalterable security and an eternal rest".
3 Cf. Kempis, Imitation of Christ I.3 c.47.

APPENDICES

As we have already warned the reader in our opening words, we are going to offer as an appendix some complements that we consider of great interest and that fit admirably with the doctrinal body presented in the previous pages. They are, specifically, the following: 1.

Pontifical doctrine on religious life.

2. The chapter dedicated to religious in the dogmatic constitution on the Church, of the Second Vatican Council. 3.

The decree "Perfectaé carita tis>>, of the Second Vatican Council.

4. The booklet "The Cloister Discipline", by Thomas of Kempis. 5. The "Cautions and Warnings" of St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa, dedicated to their friars and nuns.

Appendix I

PONTIFICAL DOCTRINE ON RELIGIOUS LIFE In the very interesting collection on "Pontifical Teachings" published by Desclée, one of the volumes is entitled Institutes of Perfect Life*. In it, the Benedictine monks of the Abbey of Solesmes have selected a series of pontifical texts on religious life covering a period of two centuries* from Benedict XIV (d 1758) to John XXIII (d 1963). The following is the logical index of the volume, with slight modifications, which will give the reader an idea of the very rich content of the pontifical messages on religious life. All the affirmations in

this index are found extensively developed in as many pontifical texts. Introduction: The Church and Religious Life

1. The mission of the Church is to lead men to holiness. She fulfills this mission by observing the precepts and exhorting to the practice of the counsels, especially by religious institutes which, ordained for this purpose, support her mission. For this reason the Church has always fostered the religious life and has always held it in the highest esteem, as is shown by tradition and by Latin and Eastern canon law. 1 Les instituís de vie parfaite, presented and presented by the Moines de Solesmes (Desclée, Belgium 1962).

3, Her constant concern for religious life is manifested in her legislation. It is the Church herself who organizes the institutes of perfection, thus publicly recognizing them as schools of holiness. Part One

NATURE AND FORMS OF RELIGIOUS LIFE Chapter i NATURE OF RELIGIOUS LIFE Religious life is a stable kind of life approved by the Church in which, in addition to the common duties imposed on all the faithful by the precepts, its members commit themselves to practice the three evangelical counsels, under a rule and in a society approved by the Church, with a view to attaining Christian perfection. L

Perfection, the goal of religious life

1. The end of religious institutes is to lead their members to Christian perfection or holiness. Holiness consists in union with God, which is realized by charity toward God and neighbor and is manifested in the service of the Church. 2.

To tend to this end is the first and essential obligation of the members of the states of perfection, which is to prevail over every other obligation. 3. In fact, all men, whatever their state of life, should strive for holiness, since all have been invited by Christ. In order to tend toward holiness more effectively, generous Christians-without necessarily binding themselves to a state of perfection-refrain from what is simply an obligation and practice the evangelical counsels. Religious, however, have at their disposal more effective and higher means which are proper to them. Religious life also tends to the imitation of Christ and seeks the glory of God. II.

Specific elements of the tendency to perfection IN RELIGIOUS LIFE

Preliminary: The approval of the Church. Every pursuit of evangelical perfection is in the interest of the good of the Church; it must therefore examine the institutes that are founded for this purpose. Her approval establishes them as institutions of the Church, which sanctions their government, their rule and constitutions, and their activities. Institutes are obliged to respect the form of life thus approved. A)

The practice of the evangelical counsels

The counsels have their origin in the Gospel. Christ practiced them and proposed them to everyone. In imitation of him, they have been practiced by the Church, which presents them to the free choice of all.

I. Pontifical doctrine on religious life a)

Nature of advice

1. Inasmuch as they go beyond what is prescribed for you in matters of poverty, chastity and obedience, the evangelical counsels are offered to the free choice of each one as excellent means of striving for perfection in the pursuit of Christ.

2. In fact, the counsels remove the obstacles to holiness, immolating the greatest concupiscence and thus providing true freedom. 3. Sanctioned by the vows, they constitute the most intimate and complete gift that man can offer to God. 4. The practice of the councils has a special apostolic efficacy because of the mystical value of the sacrifice and the facilities it provides for the apostolate. Civil society itself benefits from it. 5. It is therefore completely false that the practice of the counsels is an obstacle to perfection, or that it impedes the common good of society, or that it is contrary to true liberty, or that it is proper to weak and sickly souls.
b)

The profession of evangelical counsels

1. The practice of the counsels, which can be given in the world by private commitment, is realized in a stable and more complete and sure way by religious vows (or by the commitment required in secular institutes). 2. This commitment, secured by the support of grace, binds conscience and the Church. It is the primary duty which prevails over other works, which survives expulsion or dispersion.

a selos in the

3. The profession of the councils admits of various degrees of publicity. The Church has continually granted her preferences to public vows, and has made them necessary elements of the religious state, to which they confer a

superior dignity. Their violation constitutes sacrilege and can be dispensed only by the pope. Solemn vows imply an irrevocable consecration: they are the distinctive mark of religious orders properly so called. Simple vows characterize a great number of institutes which the Church has admitted to the religious state. More recently it has also recognized the commitment to practice the counsels issued in secular institutes. There are also societies without public vows, assimilated to the religious state. c)

The counsel of chastity

1. The invitation to perfect chastity is proper to the New Testament. It is enshrined in tradition and has been endlessly repeated by the Church. 2. Perfect chastity, or virginity, consists in the free and perpetual renunciation of marriage and of all sensual affection or pleasure for love of God and conformity to Christ. It is a consecration of body and soul to God, comparable to a nuptial rite. 3. Perfect chastity is recommended for its fruits: it liberates us from temporal solicitude and cares, allows us to be more intimately united to God and facilitates the highest moral life, which has earned it the name “angelic life.

4. This liberation also allows her to give herself entirely to the service of her neighbor, where she expands in spiritual fatherhood and motherhood. She brings to the Church and to society the support of prayer, sacrifice, example and the innumerable works that she makes possible. An eminent witness of faith and charity, it is a manifestation of the holy and fruitful virginity of the Church. As a total consecration to God and the most efficacious means of uniting oneself to

Him and serving Him, virginity realizes a state of life superior to marriage. This is a truth of faith, repeated unceasingly by the popes. This superiority does not, however, constitute an obligatory means of perfection and does not diminish the value of Christian marriage, which religious have the duty to esteem and where vocations to virginity are formed. The commitment to perfect chastity does not mean fear of marriage or the selfish care of one's own bodily integrity. Various errors have ignored this traditional doctrine, causing a decrease in vocations and obliging the supreme magisterium of the Church to clarify the following points: a) It is false that only marriage can ensure the development of the personality and that it is necessary to the organism. b) Marriage does not constitute in itself a more effective means of union with God. c) The renunciation of marriage does not endanger the common good of society or of the Church, since it allows to serve them more effectively. Consequently, it is necessary to restore esteem for consecrated celibacy and virginity. It is the proper duty of clerics. This ideal should be presented to young women as fully responding to the vocation of women. 6. Practiced from the origins of the Church, required of Latin clerics and, in the Eastern Church, of the higher ranks of the hierarchy, perfect chastity is the fundamental characteristic of all consecrated souls. The demands of the vow are the same as those of the virtue of chastity. It is an arduous virtue, but it is possible with the grace granted to those who respond to Christ's invitation. However, it is too heavy a burden for certain temperaments, which must be excluded before committing themselves. 8. The guardianship of chastity demands continual vigilance, mortification and flight from the occasions of sin; it is facilitated by separation from the world, enclosure, recourse to prayer and frequent reception of the sacraments. d) The counsel of obedience 1. Recommended by Sacred Scripture and by the practice of the Church, submission to an authority responds to a

disposition of God to save men by means of other men. It is all the more necessary for those who tend to perfection. Placing its ideal in Christ, “obedient unto death,” religious obedience has always enjoyed the approval of the Church. 2. Obedience consists in the free renunciation of one’s own will in order to fulfill the will of God, manifested by the visible authority of the superior. By realizing an interior liberation, obedience allows a total donation to God. It is the foundation of religious life and the condition of its apostolic radiance.

3. Religious obedience, the scope and extent of which is specified by the rule and constitutions, is inspired by charity and goes beyond simple material conformity. The conditions of modern life have caused religious obedience to be judged too burdensome and the very principles of the life of perfection to be disregarded. Consequently, a method of perfection has been advocated on the basis of lowering the abnegation of individual freedom. To present this method to souls desirous of perfection is contrary to the will of the Church, which wishes to maintain the traditional conception. Religious obedience, in fact, does not constitute a danger to freedom and human dignity, nor does it imply external coercion. On the contrary, the vow confers an eminent dignity, since it makes the person who takes it sacred. Nor is obedience opposed to the development of the personality, since it is exercised together with the duty of spiritual growth and maturity. The imputation of formalism is an illusion, since obedience is entirely ordered to charity. Obedience does not confer on the superior exorbitant rights over consciences. The homage of obedience goes back, in fact, to God, and the superior cannot command except in

the name of the Lord and within the limits of his office, of the rule and of the constitutions. e)

The poverty council

x. Evangelical poverty is founded on the example, invitation and teachings of Christ. It consists in the voluntary abandonment of riches and in the dependent use of the goods necessary for life, for the sole search for God. Poverty is a source of virtue and engenders joy. It has a high apostolic value of exemplarity, particularly opportune in the modern world. 3. The modalities of poverty vary according to the institutes, which can possess radical or received goods, live by their work or by alms, but never admit private peculium. The goods of the institutes benefit from the right of ownership and are goods of the Church. They are not intended for the personal welfare of the religious, but for the community and its works. It is necessary, however, to keep a certain measure in the provision of modern resources and facilities. 5. The use of these goods by the religious should be made in complete dependence on the superiors. Poverty imposes a very moderate use of all things and is subject to numerous privations. 6. True poverty is united to poverty of spirit, made up of abnegation and humility. B)

The rule

1. To serve as a guide on the path of perfection, the founders have given their institutes a rule or constitutions approved by the Church. It is an element of religious life which indicates the field or domain of obedience. 2. Its observance-which is not a substitute for the movement of charity-is a very effective means of sanctification, as the history of holiness attests.

3. To strive for perfection by the observance of the rule constitutes a duty, and superiors are charged with ensuring its execution. 4. Diversified in each institute, the rule expresses the will of the founder and indicates the particular purpose of the institute. The rule assures the unity of the members, the prosperity and the beneficent influence of the institute. 5. The approved rules are to be carefully safeguarded. If on some secondary points certain adaptations are necessary, everything must be done in perfect submission to the hierarchy.

C)

The religious society

1. In their collective imitation of Christ, the institutes represent the social framework suitable for the full profession of the perfect life as it is officially recognized by the Church. Diversified according to the particular purpose assigned to them by their rule and according to their juridical status, each institute possesses its own spirit, emanating from its rule and traditions, the interpreter of which is the superior and which must be maintained at all costs. The stability and fruitfulness of the institutes depend entirely on this, 3. The relationships of the institute and its members are perfectly defined by the rule. Each religious should conform his spirit and conduct to the spirit and the rule of his institute, without seeking any other way of perfection. Image of the apostolic community, recommended by the Church and by tradition, common life is a primary element of all institutes of perfection, with the exception of secular institutes. With its various demands, especially in the area of poverty, and as an exercise of fraternal charity, common life is a source of spiritual benefits and gives the

religious house a family character while at the same time constituting a support and protection of the vocation and a high example of charity.

D)

Separation from the world

1. Every perfect form of life realizes a state of life separated from the “world. This effective separation, whose essential note consists in the detachment of the spirit from the world, ensures the development and expansion of charity. 2. However, even in its most absolute form, renunciation of the world does not constitute social desertion; on the contrary, it permits a wider service of the Church and of society. 3. The procedures for separation from the world vary according to vocations. Monastic solitude is the most complete and complete form, protected by enclosure. Many institutes, however, remain in their activity mixed with the world. At the opposite extreme to enclosure, secular institutes, without being in any way of the world, remain by special vocation entirely in the world.

III.

Excellence of religious life

Perfect Christian life, in which God is truly put first, religious life constitutes “the better part” (Le 10:42), the highest form of life and a chosen portion in the Church. 2.

It surpasses all other states of life in dignity and security of life.

order to salvation. It is principally superior to marriage and to associations of piety and apostolate. For the same reason, it enjoys the divine predilections and those of the Church and deserves the esteem of all. Chapter 2

DIVERSE FORMS OF RELIGIOUS LIFE L

Basis for the multiplicity of institutes of perfection

x. Under a fundamental unity of purpose and inspiration, religious life has very diverse aspects represented by multiple institutes. This multiplicity and diversity is, above all, the work of the Holy Spirit acting through the founders and manifests the action of Providence. The Church wishes to avoid an excessive proliferation of institutes, but she blesses and encourages this diversity and is concerned to maintain it because it highlights diverse aspects of the Church, is a sign of her vitality, and responds to the needs of the times and of souls. II.

a)

di VERSIFICATION IN THE COURSE OF HISTORY

Seniority

1. Since apostolic times Christian communities have always counted on ascetics or continents or virgins. 2. During the persecutions the monasticism appeared in the East, thanks to him the doctrine and the organization of the perfect life were clarified. The whole* development of religious life is indebted to him and benefited from his influence. 3. From the East the monasticism spread to Africa, with the support of St. Augustine, and then to Europe, thanks especially to the rule of St. Benedict. Following this development, the Church has recognized with great frequency the profession

of perfect life, granting its preferences to the public vow issued in a recognized association. b)

Median Age

At the beginning of the Middle Ages, religious life in the West was represented by canons regular, monks and nuns. Later, military and hospitaller orders were created. 2. In the course of the centuries, monasticism has known periods of decadence, followed by illustrious reforms. 3. Since monks could not devote themselves to external ministries, other forms of life were created to respond to the needs of the times. Thus arose, principally, the Friars Minor (or Franciscans) and the Friars Preachers (or Dominicans). After the approval of the rule of St. Francis, the foundations had to adopt one of the four rules already approved. c)

Modern Age

1. - Later, the various families of clerics regular were bound together. The Society of Jesus placed itself, by a special vow, at the disposal of the pope.

2. From the 15th century, congregations of simple vows appeared, which the Canonical Code assimilated to the religious state, as well as societies of common life. 3. Among women, nuns represented the only form of religious life until the 16th century. From this century onwards, new orders took charge of apostolic and charitable works. This internal division of the nuns and the creation of societies dedicated solely to works prepared the recognition by the Canonical Code of numerous congregations of nuns. 4. In our day, by the approval of secular institutes, the Church has opened

the state of perfection to a greater number of the faithful and has placed them in the very bosom of the secular condition. These associations possess the substance of religious life, without, however, leading a common life or constituting a religious state. Their members keep in their forms of life and apostolate all the characteristics of the secular condition. III.

Diversity according to legal status

i . The legislation of the Church has been modeled on the development of the religious life and has officially integrated it among its states of life. According to its external organization, it has distinguished: a) The religious state, a complete canonical state of perfection, which involves the emission of public vows: solemn vows for religious orders and simple vows for congregations. b) Societies of common life, assimilated to the religious state, without possessing all the juridical guarantees. c) Secular institutes, recognized as a state of perfection, without constituting a religious state. 2. However, according to the immediate authority on which they depend, the following are distinguished: a) Exempt orders and congregations, subject directly to the pope. b) Congregations of pontifical right. c) Congregations of diocesan right. IV. a)

Diversity in relation to holy orders

Priesthood and perfect life

1. Although it obliges to the greatest perfection of life, the priesthood does not by its very nature bring with it subjection to the counsels and does not place the priest in a state of perfection. Nevertheless, the way of the counsels is offered to priests as it is to all the faithful. 2. On the other hand, access to the priesthood is open to members of the

states of perfection, and this is the general rule at present, except for brothers of obedience and in institutes of brothers. Religious life prepares them for it. 3. Entry into a clerical religion requires, for the same reason, a special vocation to cope with the double obligations. It is therefore an error to direct to the priesthood those who have only a religious vocation, just as it is an error to direct to the secular clergy those who show the signs of a vocation that is both religious and priestly,

Regular clergy

Since the priesthood is a divine institution, neither of the two clergy-the secular and the regular-has any prerogative from this point of view. The regular clergy is not, therefore, a subordinate and secondary clergy. On the other hand, the exemption enjoyed by certain institutes does not confer on them a privileged situation, nor does it derogate from the hierarchical constitution of the Church. In fact and in law, the regular clergy are engaged in all kinds of apostolic work entrusted to them according to the provisions of their institutes, and this work, so important for the apostolate of the Church, must be exercised in submission to the hierarchy and in fraternal agreement with the secular clergy. 4. Within the clerical religions, the brother converts have the same obligation to strive for perfection, the same privileges and graces as religious priests. Superiors must watch over their formation and activities and assure them of all spiritual assistance. c)

Sibling institutes

1. The states of perfection also have institutes of brothers, consecrated principally to the formation of youth and the care of the sick. They are held in high esteem by the Church.
2. This is a special vocation which must be respected and which has its own requirements. V.

Diversity according to main activity; contemplative or active

According to the main orientation of the activity, religious life is divided into contemplative life and active, apostolic or mixed life.

A) a)

Contemplative life

Nature

1. Contemplation, the goal of the contemplative life, has as its object the divine Truth considered in the simultaneous exercise of faith and charity. All are called to contemplative union with God and should seek it. But this constitutes the first task of all consecrated persons, and more especially in the canonical contemplative life. The canonical contemplative life is the religious life ordered to contemplation by means of prayer, penance, work and enclosure. All these elements are ordered to contemplation. Among them, the divine office occupies a privileged place.
b)

Apostolic character

By its very nature, the contemplative life is fully apostolic. Their penance and prayer exercise the most universal and fruitful apostolate. As guarantors of humanity before God and his official intercessors, contemplative orders contribute to the success of apostolic works. This efficacy, attested to

by history, measures and proclaims their importance in the Church. Religious life

3. The ordinary means of this apostolate, exercised without leaving silence and retreat, are: the very example of their life, public and private prayer, and penance. To these means, which must remain primary, can be added the works of the apostolate, very varied according to the institutes, which are especially opportune in our days. c)

Dignity

The contemplative life realizes the purest form of life; it is necessary to the Church as a manifestation of her holiness and as a permanent source of graces. For this reason the Church holds it in great esteem and fills it with her privileges and solicitude. Contrary to its detractors, who reproach it for being useless and idle and for not responding to modern demands, the popes affirm its permanent relevance and its usefulness for the Church and for society, and encourage contemplative religious to persevere in their vocation. d)

Requirements

In order to give oneself to the contemplative life, it is necessary to know its nature well. This is the work of formation in the novitiate, of spiritual direction, of the study of the sacred sciences and of its practice. It is necessary to love and esteem it with its proper demands, as a sure means for the perfection of charity. It is necessary to practice the duties and renunciations it imposes with fervor and simplicity in order to reap its sanctifying effects. e)

Various forms

Identical in its essential elements, the contemplative life has very different forms: a) The eremitical life, represented by the Carthusians and the Camaldolese, is the highest form. Its distinctive element is solitude. b) The coenobitic life, particularly according to the rule of St. Benedict, has as its distinctive feature the family character of the monastery. It is dedicated especially to public prayer. c) The nuns. The institution of the nuns has very varied institutes. Some of them admit certain works inside the enclosure, but all of them profess the contemplative life as primary end, under the safeguard of a strict enclosure. The present circumstances impose on the nuns certain adaptations which, while maintaining intact the primary contemplative end and the characteristics proper to each order, remedy material hardship and excessive isolation, or respond to urgent apostolic needs. The apostolic constitution Sponsa Christi indicates d field of these adaptations, improving the organization of the work, mitigating the laws of the enclosure by the distinction of a greater papal enclosure and preñor and creating federations of monasteries.

Apostolic or active religious life

Religious life and apostolate

x. The apostolic requirement which flows from the precept of charity toward one’s neighbor and which, by the same token, is part of the pursuit of perfection, is fulfilled by each institute-including contemplative orders-according to its

own particular modalities. The example given by the life of perfection is the first form for all; but prayer and sacrifice also exercise a true apostolate. Apostolic or active institutes combine the pursuit of perfection with the exercise of a ministry or charitable activity. Far from constituting an incompatibility or a handicap, religious life is a strength and a help to the apostolate and assures stability and vigor to the works. b)

Requirements of apostolic action

1. The first requirement of apostolic religious life consists in union with God. This is what nourishes zeal for souls, what gives meaning and value to activity, and what confers on it supernatural efficacy. To think or act otherwise would lead to sterile activism. 2. Consequently, religious should strive to harmonize the interior life with exterior activities, making their obligations to God and the practice of the religious virtues prevail over exterior activities, respecting the time reserved for prayer and faithfully observing their rules and constitutions. The exercise of external activities, which requires a previous formation, must be regulated by superiors, according to the norms emanating from the competent hierarchy. In this area a renewal of methods is necessary in order to adapt to the changing needs of the times. c)

Participation in the apostolate of the Church

Religious institutes play a considerable part in the apostolate of the Church, indispensable for the fulfillment of her mission. They are auxiliary to the bishops and the secular clergy. The same religious sisters and lay religious prolong and supplement, in part, the priestly ministry. d)

Fields of apostolate

This activity is carried out according to the particular mission assigned by the Church to each institute: a) Pastoral ministry is undertaken by many institutes, especially in the form of preaching or retreats and in the missions. The religious sisters also provide valuable assistance. b) The missions have been and continue to be largely the work of religious, with considerable help from the religious sisters. Their purpose is the establishment of the Church throughout the world, and they involve the accession of natives to religious life and the establishment of indigenous congregations and contemplative monasteries. c) The education and formation of youth are also largely assured by religious men and women. It is a primordial undertaking and work for the Church and for civil society, which is the basis of the great esteem that the Church has for these institutes.

The mission of religious in the field of education, having as its goal the integral formation of the human person and of the Christian, makes great religious and professional demands. Religious life provides them with a powerful aid in this regard. d) Catholic Action receives its most extensive help from religious families, especially in schools. The secular institutes collaborate with it directly. e) The works of assistance to the poor, to the sick, to all kinds of misery constitute the special mission of numerous institutes. Thanks to their total dedication, enlightened by faith, these institutes stand out above the works of lay assistance. Their action prepares and facilitates evangelization and manifests the maternal love of the Church. This vocation also has great religious and professional demands.

part

IN THE CHURCH AND IN CIVIL SOCIETY Chapter

i

IN THE CHURCH L

Place and mission in the Church

1. Composed, by divine institution, of clerics and laity, the Church has reserved a special place for those who profess among them the evangelical counsels, inasmuch as they tend by office to their proper end, which is sanctity. The Church has integrated the institutes of perfection into her own life, making the religious state one of the three states of life recognized by her legislation, and recognizing it as a fundamental organic element of the Church herself. 2. The members of the states of perfection constitute in the Church a select and chosen portiona true elite-which constitutes the ornament and glory of the Church. They help her to fulfill her mission and are one of her principal forces. This help, to which history bears witness, remains indispensable in our own day. The cooperation of religious is exercised principally in two ways: a) By making holiness shine forth in the Church by their office, as is confirmed by innumerable canonizations of their members. h) By supporting the apostolic action of the Church through prayer, penance and the various ministries and works of beneficence and civilization. II.

Relations of the states of perfection WITH THE ECCLESIASTIC HIERARCHY

a)

With the Sovereign Pontiff

In addition to the submission which every Christian faithful owes to the pope, religious are subject to him by virtue of the vow of obedience. By virtue of these titles and because of their singular importance in the Church, the Holy See exercises its solicitude and vigilance over the states of perfection.

1. Pontifical doctrine on religious life

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2. The pope ordinarily exercises his authority over them through the Sacred Congregation for Religious and, more immediately, through the authority of the superiors themselves. 3. For this reason, the popes have always considered it one of their principal duties to protect and favor religious families: a) by watching, above all, for the maintenance of observance and for the suitable formation of religious; b) by watching over the adaptations required by circumstances; c) by defending their rights against usurpations and attacks; d) by warning them against errors and deviations. 4. Apart from this general supervision, the Holy See exercises its own rights over solemn vows, over the approval of constitutions and of new institutes, which it has the power to modify, and over the renewal of religious families, which it can suppress. It also exempts certain institutes from the jurisdiction of the local bishop. Linked in a special way to the Sovereign Pontiff by their vow of obedience, religious should give an example of respect and submission to the Holy See and maintain close contacts with it. This submission, which has characterized the work of the great founders, contributes to a more sure guidance of the Holy Spirit and conditions the influence and influence of the

institutes. In this sense, religious are a support for the Papacy. b)

With the bishops

1. Religious men and women are the first and best auxiliaries of the bishops and the secular clergy. They constitute a very important factor in the Christian life of the diocese, in which they often compensate for the numerical insufficiency of the clergy. Although, by common law, religious must submit to the bishop, there are certain restrictions on the exercise of episcopal rights in order to promote the internal good and the ministries of the institutes. 3. The exemption removes a certain number of institutes from the jurisdiction of the bishop in order to submit them immediately to the pope, while maintaining certain rights of the ordinary. The union which should exist between the bishop, the secular clergy and the religious demands that the rights of each be respected. The bishops should grant their benevolence to the religious and remind their clergy of the high esteem in which consecrated virginity should be held. They should take special care of nuns and religious. They should maintain and defend their privileges and rights. Religious, for their part, owe the bishops respect and submission, especially in the organization of the local apostolate.

Chapter 2

IN CIVIL SOCIETY I. Titles for civil existence

i. The existence of religious institutes is based: -on the natural right to choose their way of life; -on the natural right of association; -on the right of the Church to found institutes destined for her service. 2 Civil law must recognize this existence, all the more so since religious institutes are not opposed to any form of government and are, on the contrary, a source of great social benefits. II. Services rendered to society

1. Despite accusations of uselessness and harmfulness, religious, even contemplatives, have rendered and always render great services to civil society: -monks saved Europe from barbarism; -military orders defended it; -in all ages, religious have constituted an element of true civilization► 2. In the State, religious are a factor of moral elevation, order and prosperity, especially by works of education and beneficence; and they have contributed mightily to the prestige of Christian nations. III. Rights and Duties

If religious institutes, which depend solely on the Church, must obey just civil laws, the State, for its part, must respect their existence and, in case of dispute, have recourse to the Holy See. It is an abuse and an injustice on the part of the State to interfere in its government to regulate the emission of vows or to modify the laws of exemption or under the cloak or pretext of reform. 2. The State cannot, without infringing the right of property and the right of the Church, dispose of the goods of religious, or forbid them to possess them. It is also a great injustice to withdraw from them the right to teach, a measure which also infringes on the right of

parents and in fact suppresses the congregations dedicated to teaching. 3. Finally, the State has no right to suppress religious institutes, which would be tantamount to condemning the exercise of perfection. IV. The

ABUSES OF CIVIL POWER

X. Prior to the French Revolution, governments often attacked the rights of religious. The revolution suppressed them. The nineteenth century has known many persecutions in Europe and America. In our days these outrages continue. Under the various pretexts invoked, hatred of God and His Church and the desire to de-Christianize society are concealed. Apart from their impious and injurious character and their manifest arbitrariness, the persecutory measures violate all rights. They are null and void.

/. 2.

Persecutory measures have very negative consequences:

-They weaken the vitality and discipline of the institutes, at times forcing them into exile; they withhold from the pope and the bishops the necessary aid; they ruin missionary works; they hinder the saving action of the Church; they do great harm to souls; they blind civil society to a source of order and prosperity; they damage national prestige. 3. The Popes have always come to the defense of persecuted religious and have reprobated and declared unjust laws invalid. The bishops have likewise defended religious. 4. Religious have the duty to oppose unjust decrees; but in order to remain faithful to their vocation, they should rather accept the abandonment of works or goods. In persecution

they should see a divine plan and be happy to suffer for Christ, while maintaining an attitude of firmness and gentleness. In this way they also cooperate in the mission of the Church, and their sufferings are a pledge of resurrection.

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LIFE IN THE STATES OF PERFECTION Chapter

i

PREPARATION FOR THE PERFECT LIFE A) a) a)

Vocation

Its essential elements

1. Although the evangelical call to perfection is addressed to all, not everyone can respond to it by the profession of the counsels: a special degree from God is necessary. 2. The vocation involves two elements: the divine call, with the grace that goes with it, and the recognition of this call and the acceptance by superiors. b)

Secondary causes

The divine call often comes through various intermediaries: i.° The Christian family is the normal environment where vocations are awakened. The parents should neither force the child's response nor contradict it, but rather favor it, welcoming the vocation as a grace and an honor and a source of blessings on the family. 2.0 The Christian school, as well as associations of piety and Catholic Action, also favor its birth and development. 3.0 Counselors and teachers, without ever imposing entry into religious life, nor dissuading it-unless they can prove inadequacy-should encourage it.

616 c)

Appendices The problem of vocations

In fact, as a result of a decline in faith and generosity, of the disesteem of consecrated celibacy and of a certain overvaluation of the apostolic action of the laity, the number of those who ask to enter the religious life is decreasing and does not respond to the present needs. To remedy this state of affairs it is necessary to restore the esteem of vocations, to pray for this intention and to help vocations with all the means at our disposal. d)

The answer to vocation

If the response to the vocation can encounter obstacles or impediments, the choice of the perfect life is an absolute right, and it is dangerous to subtract oneself from the divine call. This response, which is the work of the whole religious life, carries with it demands and involves renunciations that have spiritual compensations. It is a sign of greatness of soul and of generosity. e)

Admission to the religious family

Those in charge of welcoming vocations must ensure with the greatest care the aptitudes of the candidates and, for clerical institutes, discern whether it is a question of a priestly vocation or only a religious vocation. This severity, as well as strict observance, is a pledge and guarantee of new vocations. B) i.

Religious formation

Guiding principles

The development of the vocation demands a whole education, whose primary purpose is sanctification and requires a complete and adapted formation in which all the

stages are respected. The supernatural means must retain the first rank, without neglecting the natural means or modern techniques. This formation takes place far from the turmoil of the world and from active ministries. The responsibility falls on the superiors, under the vigilance of the Holy See and following its directives. It demands on the part of the educators science, prudence and holiness. 2.

Elements of training

a) Religious formation. In religious formation, the traditional rules of asceticism, which is always necessary to overcome nature and open oneself to God, should be followed, being very careful not to prefer to it the natural virtues, which are always necessary. b) Intellectual formation. Presupposed the preliminary studies of letters and sciences and the study of Latin, the sacred sciences, without being absolutely indispensable to acquire perfection, are a very effective means to form and develop the interior life. They are required for the priesthood and for the fruitful exercise of apostolic offices. c) Pastoral and professional formation. Apostolic ministries require special preparation. A professional preparation is particularly required in hospitaller and teaching institutes, and contributes to their apostolic radiance,

The stages of training

The Novitiate. The formation of the novices, so important for the religious and for the institute, is consecrated first of all to the exercise of religious virtues and to the knowledge of the institute. a)

b) The student body. The student bodies of religious institutes, recognized and approved, depend on the Congregation of Religious. The professors exercise a canonical office and must transmit to their students the doctrine of the Church. They must conform to the directives of the magisterium in fidelity to Thomistic teaching and method, prudently initiating the students in modern questions. Since the aim of the studies is an integral religious, priestly and apostolic formation, prayer and spiritual life should be united to intellectual formation, as well as to a preparation for active ministries. The apostolic constitution of Pius XII Sedes Sapientiae instituted a year of pastoral theology at the end of studies.

Chapter 2

THE INTERNAL GOVERNMENT OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTES

A) r.

The superior

Nature of religious authority

The superior is an ecclesiastical office associated with the Supreme Pastor, either directly by delegation of jurisdiction or by dominative power through the approval of the constitutions. For the same reason, the superior, responsible before God, is obliged to exercise his authority according to the spirit of the Church. 2.

Its role and attributions

The superior expresses to the inferiors the will of God. God, through him, constitutes the motive for obedience. This divine will is consigned and delimited in the rule and constitutions. The superior is the guardian and maintainer of the rule and constitutions and of the spirit of the institute, which he cannot modify; although it belongs to him to promote the necessary adaptations. In clerical religions, he has the special responsibility of presenting suitable candidates for holy orders. The superior must exercise his vigilance over doctrines. This vigilance extends also to the apostolic activities and productions of the religious, 3.

Qualities of religious authority The superior must exercise his office: - with prudence, guided by the doctrine and directives of the magisterium; - with firmness; - with kindness.

 B) a)

Forms of government

Federative forms

The federations, which are reconcilable with the necessary autonomy of the monasteries, are imposed today, as much to the monks as to the nuns, to remedy the isolation and to assure the mutual aid. The benefits of union, while respecting autonomy, also affect the union of the various congregations. b)

Centralized regimes Apostolic institutes are best suited to centralized regimes. C)

Collaboration between the various institutes

However legitimate it may be to maintain the characteristics proper to each institute, the common good and the apostolate demand harmony and mutual help. Many congresses and associations respond to this need, in particular the “Union of Major Superiors”.

Chapter 3 ADAPTATION AND RENEWAL OF RELIGIOUS LIFE A)

Necessity and purpose

1. Religious institutes need periodic adaptations in order to fulfill, according to changing circumstances, their respective missions. 2. This need extends to all institutes and particularly affects the methods of formation and apostolate. Far from being a sign of laxity, this renewal is a sign of life and progress, as the history of the ancient orders testifies.

For having neglected it, certain institutes have been suppressed. B)

Renewal conditions

x. Adaptations cannot affect the essential elements of the perfect life, which are perfectly adapted to the needs of all times. The rule, constitutions, characteristics and spirit proper to each institute, as well as its traditions, must be safeguarded above all else. 2. Nevertheless, if the untimely search for change must be rejected, respect for the past should not prevent the necessary adaptations, but only guide in their adoption. It is necessary to welcome without hesitation the convenient new means: that is, those which respect the rules and traditions and are recommended by the Holy See. This work of adaptation must be carried out with due submission to superiors and to the Holy See. The characteristic of false reforms is that they are carried out without their authority.

Conclusion Permanent actuality of religious life. Whether we are dealing with ancient institutes or modern forms of consecrated life, contemplative orders or active institutes, the actuality of religious life is well founded:

- in the permanence of the divine call; - in the efficacy and value of the means it proposes; - in the pressing needs of the Church and society.

Appendix

II

VATICAN COUNCIL II: DOGMATIC CONSTITUTION ON THE CHURCH

Chapter

43.

VI: From

the religious

Chastity, poverty and obedience

The evangelical counsels, chastity offered to God, poverty and obedience, as counsels founded on the words and examples of the Lord and recommended by the apostles, by the fathers, doctors and pastors of the Church, are a divine gift which the Church received from the Lord, and which by his grace are perpetually preserved. The authority of the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, took care to interpret these counsels, to regulate their practice and also to determine the stable ways of living them. As a result, like a tree that branches out splendidly and vigorously in the field of the Lord from a seed planted by God, very diverse forms of monastic or cenobitic life (solitary life and life in common) have grown in a great variety of families that develop either for the benefit of their own members or for the good of the whole Body of Christ, b These families offer their members all the conditions for a greater stability in their way of life, a doctrine tested to achieve perfection, a fraternal community in the militia of Christ and a freedom enhanced by obedience, so that they can faithfully keep and safely fulfill their religious profession, advancing in the life of charity with a joyful spirit 1 2 3. Such a state, in the divine and hierarchical constitution of the Church, is not an intermediate state between the clerical condition and the lay condition, but from the latter and from the former some

of the faithful feel called by God to the enjoyment of a particular gift in the life of the Church, in order to contribute, each in his own way, to the salvific mission of the Church 44.

Special Distinctive

By the vows, or by other sacred bonds analogous to them in his own way, the Christian faithful binds himself to the practice of the three evangelical counsels mentioned above, giving himself totally to the service of God most beloved, in a dedication that creates in him a special relationship with the service and glory of God. Already by baptism he had died to sin and had consecrated himself to God; now, in order to obtain a more abundant fruit of baptismal grace, he seeks to free himself, by the profession of the evangelical counsels in the Church, from the impediments that might draw him away from the fervor of charity and the perfection of divine worship, and he consecrates himself more intimately to the divine 1 Cf. Rosweydus, Vita Patrum (Antwerpiae 1628); Apophtegmata Patrum: PG 65: Palladius, Historia Lavsiaca: PG 34,99r$s (ed. C. Butler, Cambridge 189$ Í1904]); Pius XI, const. apost. Umbriates, 8 Jul. 1924: AAS 16 (1924) 386*387; Pius XII, aloe. Nous sommes heureux, 11 Apr., J95S: AAS 50 (195S) 283. 2 Paul VI, aloe. Magno gaudio, 23 May 1964: AAS 56 (1964) 566. 3 Cf. Cod. lur. Can. can. c.487 et 488,4.°; Pius XII, aloe, Annus socer, Dec. 8, 1950: AAS 43 (1951) 27f; Id., const. apost. Provida Mater, Feb. 2, 1947* AAS 39 (1947) isoss.

service4 5 6. This consecration will be all the more perfect if Christ, united by an indissoluble bond to his Bride, the

Church, is better represented by firmer and more stable bonds. And since the evangelical counsels have the virtue of uniting those who practice them in a special way to the Church and to her mystery by the charity to which they lead, their lives must be consecrated to the good of the whole Church. From this arises the duty to work according to one's strength and according to the form of one's vocation, whether by prayer or by laborious activity, to establish or strengthen the kingdom of Christ in souls and to spread it throughout the whole world. Hence, too, the Church protects and favors the proper nature of the various religious institutes. Consequently, the profession of the evangelical counsels appears as a distinctive mark which can and should effectively attract all the members of the Church to fulfill without faltering the duties of the Christian vocation. For, since the people of God do not have a permanent citizenship in this world, but seek a future one, the religious state, which leaves its followers freer from earthly cares, better manifests to all present the heavenly goods-present even in this life-and, above all, bears witness to the new and eternal life attained by Christ's redemption, and foreshadows the future resurrection and the glory of the heavenly kingdom. And this same state imitates more closely and perpetually represents in the Church that form of life which the Son of God chose when he came into the world to fulfill the will of the Father, and which he left proposed to the disciples who would follow him. Finally, it brings to the attention of all, in a special way, the elevation of the kingdom of God above all earthly things and its great demands; it also demonstrates to all mankind the marvelous greatness of the virtue of a reigning Christ and the infinite power of the Holy Spirit who works wonders in his Church. Therefore, a state whose essence is in the profession of the evangelical counsels, even if it does not belong to the hierarchical structure of the Church, belongs nevertheless, in an indisputable way, to her life and holiness. 45.

Since it is the duty of the ecclesiastical hierarchy to feed the people of God and to lead them to the best pastures (cf. Ez 34:14), it is also its duty to direct by the wisdom of its laws the practice of the evangelical counsels, by which the perfection of charity towards God and towards one's neighbor is fostered in a special way^. The same hierarchy, docilely following the impulse of the Holy Spirit, admits the rules proposed by illustrious men and women, and approves them authentically after a more complete ordination, and, moreover, is present with its watchful and protective authority in the development of the institutes, erected everywhere for the edification of the Body of Christ, so that they may grow and flourish in a thousand ways, according to the spirit of their founders, . The Supreme Pontiff, by reason of his primacy over the whole Church, looking to the best providence for the needs of the whole flock of the Lord, can exempt from the jurisdiction of ordinaries and submit to his sole authority any institute of perfection and each and every one of its members.4 Paul VI, l.c. p.s67. 5 Cf. St. Thomas, Summa Theol. 2-2 q.184 a.3, et q.188 a.2; St. Bonaventure, opusc.n, Apotom pauperum c.3 3 3 (ed. Opera, Quaracchi, t.8 [1898I p.24Sa). 6 Cf. Cono. vat. I, schema De Ecclesia Chrhti 0,15 et adnot.48: Mansi 51,5493 et 619S; Leo XIII, epist. An milieu des consolations, 23 Dec. 1900: ASS 33 (1900-1901) 361; Pius XII, const apost. Provida Mater l.c. p,i 14S.

bros7. And for the same reason they can be left or entrusted to the proper patriarchal authority. The members of these institutes, in the fulfillment of their duties to the Church,

according to the particular form of their institute, should render due reverence and obedience to the bishops according to canon law, for their pastoral authority in the particular churches and for the necessary unity and concord in apostolic work.8 The Church not only raises by her sanction religious profession to the dignity of a canonical state, but presents it in the liturgical action itself as a state consecrated to God. Since the Church herself, with the authority received from God, receives the vows of the professed, she obtains from the Lord by public prayer divine help and grace, commends them to God, and imparts to them a spiritual blessing, associating their oblation with the Eucharistic sacrifice. 46.

Purification of the soul

Let religious, therefore, take special care that, through them, the Church may better show Christ to the faithful and to the unbelievers every day, whether he be engaged in contemplation on the mountain, or whether he be announcing the kingdom of God to the crowds, healing the sick and wounded, converting sinners to a righteous life, blessing children,' doing good to all, always obedient to the will of the Father who sent him 9. Finally, let it be well understood by all that the profession of the evangelical counsels, though it involves the renunciation of goods which are undoubtedly to be had in abundance, yet it is not an impediment to the enrichment of the human person, but, by its very nature, greatly favors it. For the evangelical counsels, voluntarily accepted according to the personal vocation of each one, contribute not a little to the purification of the heart and to freedom of spirit, continually excite the fervor of charity and, above all, as is shown by the example of so many holy founders, are capable of making the life of the Christian man more similar to the virginal and poor life which Christ Our Lord chose for himself and which

his Mother the Virgin Mary embraced. Let no one think that religious, by their consecration, become strangers to humanity or useless for the earthly city. For even if in some cases they are not directly present to their contemporaries, they are nevertheless present in a deeper way in the bowels of Christ, and cooperate with them spiritually so that the building of the earthly city may always be grounded in God and directed to him, “lest those who build it labor in vain” l0. Therefore this sacred synod confirms and praises the men and women, brothers and sisters who, in monasteries, in schools and hospitals or in the missions, enlighten the Bride of Christ with constant and humble fidelity in their consecration and generously offer to all people the most varied services. 47.

Perseverance

Let everyone, therefore, who has been called to the profession of these counsels, strive to persevere and excel in the vocation to which he has been called, so that holiness may abound more abundantly in the Church and for the greater glory of the one and indivisible Trinity, which in Christ and through Christ is the source and origin of all holiness. 7 Cf. Leo XIII, Consl. Romans Pontiffs, 8 May 1881: ASS 13 (1880*1881) 483; Pius XII, aloe. Annus saccr, 8 Dec. 19S0: AAS 43 (i9Si)28f. s Cf. Pius XII, aloe. Annus sacer í.c. p.28; Id., const, apost, Sedes sapientiae, 31 May 1956: AAS 48 (1956) 3Ss; Paul VI; l.c. p.S70-S7i* Cf. Pius XII, ene. Mystíci Corporis, 29 Jun. 1943: AAS 3S (1943) 214S. 10 Cf. Pius XII, aloe. Annus’Sflder-l.c. p.30; aloe. Sous la maternelle proteclion, 9 Dec, 1957; AAS so (1958) 39f.

Appendix

III

DECREE ON THE APPROPRIATE RENEWAL OF RELIGIOUS LIFE*.

1. In the Constitution which begins Lumen gentium, the sacred Council has previously shown that the aspiration to perfect charity by means of the evangelical counsels derives from the teaching and example of the Divine Master and appears as a very clear sign of the kingdom of heaven. Now, however, it is proposed to treat of the life and discipline of the institutes whose members profess chastity, poverty and obedience, and to attend to their needs according to the advice of our times. From the very beginnings of the Church there were men and women who, through the practice of the evangelical counsels, set out to follow Christ more freely and to imitate him more closely, and, each in his own way, led a life consecrated to God. Many of them, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, lived a solitary life or founded religious families which the Church gladly received and approved with her authority. From this was born, by divine design, a marvelous variety of religious groupings, which contributed much to the Church's being not only prepared for every good work (cf. 2 Tim 3:17) and ready for the work of ministry in the building up of the Body of Christ (cf. Eph 4:12), but also to be adorned with the variety of her children's gifts, as a bride adorned for her husband (cf. Rev 21:2), and through her the manifold wisdom of God is made manifest (cf. Eph 3:10). Nevertheless, in the midst of such a variety of gifts, all those who are called by God to the practice of the evangelical counsels and profess them faithfully, consecrate themselves in a particular way to God, following Christ, who, virgin and poor (cf. Mt 8:20; Le 9:58), by his obedience unto death on the cross (Phil 2:8), redeemed and sanctified mankind. Thus, moved by charity, which the Holy Spirit pours into their hearts (cf. Rom 5:5), they live more and more for Christ and his Body, which is the Church (cf. Col 1:24). The more fervently they unite themselves with Christ by this lifelong

gift of self, the more fruitful the life of the Church becomes and the more vigorously her apostolate is made fruitful. Now, in order that this eminent value of the life consecrated to God by the profession of the counsels and its necessary function in the circumstances of the present time may redound to the greater good of the Church, this sacred Council statutes the following, which looks only to the general principles of a suitable renewal of the life and discipline of religions and, except for their proper character, of societies of common life without vows and of secular institutes. As for the particular norms for the proper exposition and application of these principles, they will be established after the Council by the competent authority.
General Principles of Renewal

2. The proper renewal of religious life involves both a constant return to the sources of all Christian life and to the original inspiration of the institutes, and an adaptation of these to the changed circumstances of the Church and to the new circumstances in which they are living.

ditions of the times. This renewal, under the impulse of the Holy Spirit and with the guidance of the Church, is to be promoted according to the following principles: a) Since the ultimate norm of religious life is the following of Christ, as proposed in the Gospel, this is to be held by all institutes as the supreme rule. b) It is for the good of the Church that institutes should have their particular character and function. Therefore, the spirit and purposes proper to the founders, as well as the sound traditions, which constitute the patrimony of each institute, should be recognized and faithfully maintained. c) All institutes are to participate in

the life of the Church and, according to their own character, to make their own and to foster according to their own strength the undertakings and purposes of the Church, for example, in biblical, liturgical, dogmatic, pastoral, ecumenical, missionary, and social matters. d) Institutes should promote among their members a suitable knowledge of the situation of men and times and of the needs of the Church, so that, judging wisely in the light of faith the circumstances of the present world and inflamed with apostolic zeal, they may be able to help people more effectively. e) Since religious life is ordered first of all to the following of Christ and to union with God by the profession of the evangelical counsels, it is necessary to consider seriously that the best accommodations to the needs of our time will not be effective unless they are animated by a spiritual renewal, to which the first place must always be given, even in the promotion of external works. Practical Criteria for Renewal

3. The manner of living, praying, and working should be duly adjusted to the present physical and psychological conditions of the members and, insofar as the character of each institute requires, to the needs of the apostolate, to the demands of culture, and to social and economic circumstances everywhere, but especially in missionary places. According to the same criteria, the form of government of the institutes should also be reviewed. The constitutions, “directories,” books of customs, prayers and ceremonies, and other similar codes should be suitably revised, and those ordinances which are out of date should be suppressed and brought into conformity with the documents of this sacred Council. Who is to carry out the renewal?

4. An effective renewal and a right accommodation can only be obtained by the cooperation of all the members of the

institute. However, to establish norms and laws concerning suitable renewal, as well as to give rise to sufficient and prudent experience, belongs only to the competent authorities, especially to general chapters, subject, if necessary, to the approval of the Holy See or of the local Ordinaries, according to the norm of law. Superiors, for their part, are to consult and hear their brothers in a suitable manner in what concerns the common interest of the whole institute. For the proper renewal of monasteries of nuns, the wishes and advice of the boards of federations or of other legitimately convoked meetings may be heeded.

625

III. Decree “Perfectae caritatis”.

Let everyone remember, however, that the hope of renewal is to be placed more in the better observance of the rule and constitutions than in the multiplication of laws. [Elements

common to all forms of

religious life]

5. Let the members of any institute first of all remember that, by professing the evangelical counsels, they have responded to a divine call so that, not only dead to sin (cf. Rom. 6:11), but also renouncing the world, they live for God alone. In fact, they gave their entire life to the service of God, which undoubtedly constitutes a special consecration that is intimately rooted in the consecration of baptism and expresses it more fully. But since this gift of self has been accepted by the Church, they should know that they are also destined for its service. This service of God should urge and foster in them the exercise of the virtues, especially humility and obedience, fortitude and chastity, by which they share in the annihilation of Christ (cf. Phil 2:7-8) as well as in his

life in the spirit (cf. Rom 8:1-13). Thus religious, faithful to their profession, leaving everything for Christ (cf. Me 10:28), should follow him (cf. Mt 19:21) as the only thing necessary (cf. Le 10:42), listening to his words (cf. Le 10:39), and devoting themselves with solicitude to the interests of Christ (cf. 1 Cor 7:32). Therefore, the members of any institute, seeking first and foremost God alone, must unite contemplation, by which they unite themselves to God in mind and heart, with apostolic love, by which they strive to associate themselves with the work of redemption and the expansion of the kingdom of God. The spiritual life must be cultivated first and foremost.

ó. Those who profess the evangelical counsels should seek and love first of all God, who first loved us (cf. 1 Lk 4:10), and should strive to foster in every way the hidden life with Christ in God (cf. Col 3:3), from which love of neighbor flows and is urged for the salvation of the world and the building up of the Church. This charity also animates and governs the very practice of the evangelical counsels. For this reason, the members of institutes should assiduously cultivate the spirit of prayer and prayer itself, drawing from the genuine sources of Christian spirituality. Above all, they should hold the Sacred Scriptures in their hands daily, in order to acquire, by the lesson and meditation of the sacred Books, the sublime knowledge of Jesus Christ (Phil 3:8). Let them celebrate the sacred liturgy with heart and mouth, according to the mind of the Church, especially the sacred mystery of the Eucharist, and fill their spiritual life at this inexhaustible source. Thus nourished at the table of the divine law and of the sacred altar, let them love the members of Christ fraternally, reverence and love the pastors with a filial spirit, live and feel more and more with the Church, and devote themselves totally to her mission. [Purely contemplative institutes]

7. Institutes which are wholly ordered to contemplation, so that their members empty themselves to God alone in solitude and silence, in assiduous prayer and generous penance, always maintain an eminent place in ■ the Mystical Body of Christ, in which not all the members have the same function (Rom 12:4), however much the need of the apostolate may urge them to do so.

active. They offer to God an exalted sacrifice of praise, they enlighten the people of God with abundant fruits of holiness, they move it by their example and they expand it with mysterious apostolic fruitfulness. Thus they are the honor of the Church and a wellspring of heavenly graces. However, their way of life must be revised according to the above principles and criteria of a suitable renewal, while faithfully maintaining their detachment from the world and the exercises proper to the contemplative life. Institutes dedicated to the apostolic life].

8. In the Church there are very many institutes, clerical or lay, consecrated to works of the apostolate, which have different gifts, according to the grace given to them: either a ministry of service, or one that teaches in teaching, one that exhorts in exhortation, one that gives with simplicity, one that exercises mercy with joy (cf. Rom 12:5-8). There are many gifts, but one and the same is the Spirit (1 Cor 12:4). In these institutes, apostolic and charitable action belongs to the very nature of religious life, as a sacred ministry and a work of charity entrusted to them by the Church and to be carried out in her name. Therefore, the whole religious life of its members should be imbued with an apostolic spirit, and all apostolic action should be informed by a religious spirit.

Thus, in order that their members respond first of all to their vocation to follow Christ and serve Christ himself in their members, it is necessary that their apostolic action proceed from intimate union with him. In this way charity itself is fostered toward God and neighbor. Such institutes, therefore, should suitably adjust their observances and practices to the requirements of the apostolate to which they are consecrated. Since, however, religious life dedicated to apostolic works takes many forms, it is necessary that its proper renewal take account of this diversity, and that, in the various institutes, the life of their members in the service of Christ be sustained by proper and consistent means. There are

to faithfully preserve the monastic life

y

conventual]

9. Let the venerable institution of the monastic life, which in the long course of the centuries has acquired illustrious merits in the Church and in human society, be faithfully preserved and let it shine more and more each day in its true spirit, both in the East and in the West. The principal office of monks is to render to the Divine Majesty a service at once humble and noble within the walls of the monastery, whether they devote themselves entirely, in their retired life, to divine worship, or whether they legitimately undertake some works of apostolate or of Christian charity. Therefore, while maintaining the character of their own institute, they should renew the ancient charitable traditions and adapt them to the present needs of souls, so that the monasteries may be like seedbeds for the edification of the Christian people. Likewise, those religions which, by rule or institute, intimately unite the apostolic life with the choral office and

monastic observances, should so adjust their way of life to the apostolate which suits them that they may faithfully maintain their way of life, however it may yield to the extraordinary good of the Church. [The

lay religious life]

10. The lay religious life, whether of men or of women, constitutes in itself a complete state of profession of the evangelical counsels. The sacred Council, therefore, esteeming it highly, because it is so

useful for the pastoral office of the Church in the education of youth, in the care of the sick and other ministries, confirms its members in their vocation and exhorts them to adjust their lives to present-day requirements. The sacred Council declares that there is nothing to prevent some of its members from receiving holy orders in the religions of the brethren, while remaining firm in their lay character, by disposition of the general chapter, in order to attend to the needs of the priestly ministry in their own houses. The

secular institutes]

11. Secular institutes, even if they are not religious institutes, nevertheless carry with them the true and complete profession, in the world, of the evangelical counsels, recognized by the Church. This profession confers a consecration on men and women, lay and clerical, who live in the world. Let them, therefore, tend principally to the total dedication of themselves to God through perfect charity, and let the institutes themselves maintain their proper and peculiar, that is, secular, character, so that they may be able

to carry out effectively and everywhere the apostolate in the world and as from the world, for which they were born. They should know very well, however, that they cannot fulfill so high a mission if their members are not carefully trained in human and divine things, so that they may in reality be the leaven of the world for the strengthening and increase of the Body of Christ. Let the directors, therefore, take serious care of the instruction, especially spiritual, to be given to their members and to promote their further formation. Chastity

12. Chastity for love of the kingdom of heaven (Mt 19:12), which religious profess, is to be esteemed as an exalted gift of grace, since it frees the human heart in a special way (cf. 1 Cor 7:32-35) so that it may be more enkindled with love for God and for all men, and is therefore a special sign of heavenly goods and a most suitable means for religious to consecrate themselves fervently to divine service and to works of the apostolate. In this way they evoke before all the faithful that marvelous union, founded by God and to be revealed in the future century, by which the Church has Christ as her only spouse. It is necessary, therefore, that the religious, committed to faithfully guarding their vocation, believe in the words of the Lord and, trusting in the help of God, do not presume on their own strength2 and practice mortification and the guarding of the senses. Let them also not omit the natural means that favor the health of soul and body. In this way they will not be moved by false doctrines that present perfect chastity as impossible or harmful to human fulfillment, and they will reject, as if by spiritual instinct, everything that endangers chastity. Moreover, let all, especially superiors, remember that chastity is more securely guarded when true fraternal charity reigns in common life among the friars. Since the observance of perfect continence intimately affects the deepest inclinations of human nature, candidates should neither embrace the profession of chastity nor be admitted to it

except after truly sufficient probation and with due psychological and affective maturity. Not only should they be warned of the dangers that threaten chastity, but they should also be instructed to accept celibacy consecrated to God, even as a good for the whole person.

628

Appendices [Poverty].

13. Voluntary poverty for the sake of following Christ, of which it is a particularly esteemed sign today, should be diligently cultivated by religious and, if necessary, expressed also in new ways. By it we share in the poverty of Christ, who, though he was rich, became poor for our sake, so that by his poverty we might become rich (cf. 2 Cor. 8:9; Mt. 8:20). But as far as religious poverty is concerned, it is not enough to submit to superiors in the use of goods, but it is necessary for religious to be poor in fact and in spirit, having their treasures in heaven (cf. Mt 6:20). Let each one in his own office be bound by the common law of work, and in thus procuring for himself what is necessary for his sustenance and his works, let him keep away from himself all undue solicitude and place himself in the hands of the providence of the heavenly Father (cf. Mt 6:25). Religious congregations can permit by their constitutions that their members renounce their own patrimonial goods, acquired or to be acquired. The institutes themselves, taking into account the circumstances of each place, should strive to give collective witness to poverty and should willingly contribute their own goods to other needs of the Church and to the support of the needy, whom all religious are to love in the heart of Jesus Christ (cf. Mt 19:21; 25:34-46; Iac 2:15-16; 1Lo 3:17). The provinces and houses of the institutes are to communicate their temporal goods to one another, so that those who have more may help those who are in need*

Although the institutes, subject to their rules and constitutions, have the right to possess all that is necessary for temporal life and for their works, they are nevertheless to avoid every kind of luxury, immoderate gain, and accumulation of goods. Obedience

14. By the profession of obedience, religious offer to Oios, as a sacrifice of themselves, the full surrender of their will, and thus unite themselves more constantly and fully to the salvific will of Oios. Therefore, after the example of Jesus Christ, who came to fulfill the will of his Father (cf. lo 4:34; 5:30; Hebr 10:7; Ps 39:9) and, taking the form of a servant (Phil 2:7), learned, by his sufferings, obedience (cf. Hebr 5:8), religious, at the prompting of the Holy Spirit, submit in faith to their superiors, who act in the place of God, and through them are directed to the ministry of all the brethren in Christ, just as Christ himself, by his submission to the Father, served his brethren and gave his life for the redemption of many (cf. Mt 20:28; lo 10:14-18). In this way they are more closely linked to the service of the Church and strive to attain the measure of the fullness of Christ (cf. Eph 4:13). In a spirit of faith and love for the will of God, therefore, religious should humbly obey their superiors according to the norm of the rule and constitutions, using the powers of their intelligence and will, as well as the gifts of nature and grace, in the execution of their commands and in the fulfillment of the offices entrusted to them, knowing that in this way they are working for the edification of the Body of Christ according to the plan of God. Thus, religious obedience, far from diminishing the dignity of the human person, leads him, through the broadest freedom of the children of God, to maturity2. Superiors, for their part, who have to give an account to God for the souls entrusted to them (cf. Hebr 13:17), docile to the will of

UL Decree “Perfect carttaüs”.

In the fulfillment of their office, they should exercise their authority in a spirit of service to their brothers, in such a way as to express the charity with which God loves them. Let them govern their subjects as children of God and with respect for the human person, encouraging their voluntary submission. Let them, therefore, especially allow them due freedom in regard to the sacrament of penance and the direction of conscience. They should lead the religious to cooperate with active and responsible obedience in the fulfillment of their duties and in the acceptance of undertakings. Superiors, therefore, should willingly listen to their brothers and encourage their collaboration for the good of the institute and of the Church, but their authority to order and command what is to be done should remain firm. Chapters and councils should faithfully fulfill the office of government entrusted to them and express, each in his own way, the participation and care of all the members for the good of the whole community. The common life

15. The common life, following the example of the early Church in which the multitude of believers were of one heart and soul (cf. Acts 4:32), nourished by evangelical doctrine, the sacred liturgy and especially the Eucharist, should persevere in prayer and in the communion of the same spirit (cf. Acts 2:42). Religious, as members of Christ, should go before one another in fraternal relations with deference (cf. Rom. 12:10), bearing one another’s burdens (cf. Gal. 6:2). Through the love of God which the Holy Spirit has poured into hearts (cf. Rom 5:5), the community, gathered together as a true family in the name of the Lord, rejoices in his presence (cf. Mt 18:20). For charity is the fullness of the law (cf. Rom 13:10) and the bond of perfection (cf. Col 3:14), and by it we know that we have passed from death to life (cf. 1 Sir 3:14). Moreover, the unity of the brethren makes

manifest the coming of Christ (cf. Io 13:35; 17:21) and from it emanates great apostolic power. But in order that the bond of brotherhood may be more intimate among the members, those who are called converts, coadjutors or by another name, should be closely united to the life and works of the community. If circumstances do not truly advise otherwise, it is necessary to see to it that in institutes of women there be only one class of sisters. In such a case, only such diversity of persons should be maintained as is required by the diversity of works to which the sisters are destined, either by a special vocation from God or by their special aptitude. Monasteries of men and institutes that are not merely lay can admit clerics and laymen, in accordance with the constitutions, under equal conditions, rights and duties, except for those who come from holy orders, according to their proper character. [Closure of the nuns]

16. Papal enclosure should be maintained for nuns of purely contemplative life, but it should be adapted to the circumstances of the times and places, suppressing outmoded customs, after hearing the wishes of the monasteries themselves. The other nuns who, by institute, dedicate themselves to external works of the apostolate, should be exempted from papal enclosure, so that they may better fulfill the functions of the apostolate entrusted to them, maintaining, however, the enclosure according to the norm of the constitutions.

Appendices [The

religious habit]

17. The religious habit, as a sign of consecration, should be simple and modest, poor and at the same time decent, suitable to the demands of health and adapted to the circumstances of time and place and to the needs of the

ministry. The habit of men and women which does not conform to these norms should be changed. Formation of Religious

18. The proper renewal of institutes depends to the greatest degree on the formation of their members. Therefore, neither the non-clerical members nor the religious sisters should be assigned immediately after the novitiate to works of the apostolate, but their religious and apostolic, doctrinal and technical formation should be properly continued in suitable houses, including the attainment of suitable degrees. But in order that the adaptation of religious life to the demands of our times may not be merely external, and that those who dedicate themselves by institute to the external apostolate may not find themselves incapable of fulfilling their task, they should be suitably instructed, according to the intellectual gifts and personal character of each one, in the present social customs and in the way of feeling and thinking in vogue today. The instruction must be done in such a way that, by the harmonious fusion of all its elements, it contributes to the unity of life of the individuals. These, for their part, must strive to perfect carefully throughout their lives this spiritual, doctrinal and technical culture, and the superiors, according to their strength, must provide them with the opportunity, help and time to do so. It is also the duty of superiors to see to it that directors, spiritual teachers and professors are very well selected and carefully prepared. Foundation of new institutes

19. In the foundation of new institutes, serious consideration should be given to their necessity, or at least to their great usefulness and potential for development, so that no useless or insufficiently vigorous institutes may be born. Those forms of religious life that take into account the nature and customs of the inhabitants and the uses and circumstances of the place should be promoted and cultivated in a special

way in the new churches. Conservation, accommodation and abandonment OF THE PROPER WORKS].

20. Institutes should retain and faithfully carry out their proper works, and, in view of the usefulness of the universal Church and of the diocese, adapt them to the needs of the times and places, using appropriate and even new means, and abandoning those works which today correspond less to the spirit and genuine character of the institute. The missionary spirit of religious institutes should be preserved in every way and, according to their character, adapted to present-day conditions, so that the preaching of the Gospel to all nations may become more effective.

111. Decree “Perfectae caritatis”.

631

[Union of institutes and merger of monasteries].

21. As for institutes and monasteries which, having heard the local ordinaries, do not, in the judgment of the Holy See, offer well-founded hope of further flourishing, they should be forbidden to receive novices and, if possible, should be united with another institute or monastery which is more vigorous and which does not differ greatly in its purpose and spirit. 2Z. Institutes and monasteries sui ium should promote, according to opportunity and with the approval of the Holy See, federations among themselves, given that in some way they belong to the same religious family; or unions, if they have almost the same constitutions and customs and are animated by the same spirit, especially when they are too small; or associations, if they are dedicated to the same or similar external works.

Conferences of major superiors] 23. Conferences or councils of major superiors, established by the Holy See, are to be

favored, since they can contribute greatly to achieving more fully the purpose of each institute, to fostering the most effective collaboration for the good of the Church, to the most just distribution of the workers of the Gospel in a given territory, and to dealing with the common affairs of religious, by establishing suitable coordination and cooperation with the episcopal conferences in the exercise of the apostolate. These Conferences can also be instituted for the scholastic institutes. Promotion of

religious vocations]

24. Priests and Christian educators should make a serious effort to ensure that religious vocations, properly and carefully selected, are given a new increase that responds fully to the needs of the Church. Even in ordinary preaching, the following of the evangelical counsels and the religious state should be treated with considerable frequency. Parents, for the Christian education of their children, should cultivate and protect in their hearts the religious vocation. Institutes, for their part, are licit, in order to foster vocations, to spread knowledge of themselves and to seek candidates, provided that this is done with due prudence and observing the norms established by the Holy See and the local Ordinary. Let religious, however, remember that the example of their life is the best recommendation of their institute and an invitation to embrace the religious life. [Conclusion]

25. The institutes for which these norms of suitable renewal are established should respond with promptness of spirit to their divine vocation and to their role in the Church at the present time. The sacred Council highly esteems their virginal, poor and obedient way of life, whose model is Christ the Lord himself, and places firm hope in their fruitful work, both hidden and public. Therefore, all religious, through integrity of faith, charity towards God and neighbor, love of

the cross and hope of the glory to come, are to spread the good news of Christ throughout the world, so that their witness may be seen by all and our Father in heaven may be glorified (cf. Mt 5:16). Thus, through the intercession of the most sweet Mother of God, the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, we pray for the good news of Christ throughout the world.

The Church, "whose life is the teaching of all, "1 will grow more and more each day and will bear more abundant fruits of health. Each and every one of the things which are disposed in this Decree were approved by the Fathers of the Sacrosanct Council. And We, by the apostolic power granted to Us by Christ, together with the venerable Fathers, approve in the Holy Spirit, decree and statute all these things, and command that what has been conciliarly decreed be promulgated for the glory of God. Rome, at St. Peter's, October 28, 1965. I,

1 St. Ambrose, De virginitate iic.2n.15 Paul,

Bishop of the Catholic Church.

Appendix

IV

THE CLAUSTRAL DISCIPLINE By Tomás de Kempis

We offer below the precious booklet of Thomas of Kempis entitled The Cloistered Discipline. It is a true jewel of medieval mysticism, which can be placed next to the incomparable Imitation of Christ by the same celebrated

author. It has been translated directly from Latin by our brother in religion Fr. Jesús Hernando Franco, O.P., whom we thank for his kind collaboration L Chapter i

WHAT CLAUSTRAL DISCIPLINE CONSISTS íLove Ja discipline, lest you

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the Lord, and perish in the way” (Ps 2:12).

The cloistered discipline, if it is carried out with exactitude, leads to great perfection, preserves from eternal damnation and grants a very high crown in the heavenly kingdom. Discipline consists principally in three things: that silence be well observed, that the divine office be devoutly celebrated, and that work be diligently exercised. Where discipline flourishes, there is greater peace and spiritual profit. Where discipline languishes, weakness grows, vices enter and virtues are enervated. Where discipline is maintained, the grace of heaven is present, devotion flourishes, reading has flavor, meditation is sweetened, prayer is enlivened, thanksgiving resounds and the voice of praise resounds, the mind is filled with joy, the understanding is enlightened, the flesh withers and the spirit is elevated. He who loves discipline, rejoices his conscience, acquires a good reputation, increases for himself eternal glory. The lover of discipline guards his mouth, seeks solitude, flees from tumult, avoids laughter, esteems weeping in order to find Jesus indulgent and friendly. He who seeks to be outside of discipline, incurs the snares of the devil and loses the devotion of the mind. In three places you should find yourself at ease with the religious for the common discipline: in the choir for psalmody, in the cell for writing and reading,

in the refectory for eating soberly and hearing the word of God. Wherever the word of God is read, there the Holy Spirit works secretly, arguing the wicked from sin and comforting the good by the hope and consolation of the Scriptures, so that they may advance further and strongly maintain the discipline of the order. For this reason St. Paul admonishes in these terms: Endure discipline and God will treat you as sons (Hebr 12:7). 1 Cf. THOMAe Hemerren a Kempis, Operq omnia v<?1.2 (Friburgi Brisigavorum 1904) p.207-319.

science (Ps 118:66). And in another place, recommending it highly, he says: Your right hand has strengthened me, and your discipline will teach me (Ps 17:36). It is a great gift of God to possess the knowledge of the Scriptures, but it seems preferable to keep the discipline of the order. That is why Christ, our supreme Master, in teaching the disciples the law of life and discipline, speaks to them in this way: If you learn these things, you will be blessed if you practice them (13:17). For one is more blessed before God to the extent that he is more fervent in the observance of discipline. Every regular discipline pursues two good things: that the constitutions be diligently observed and that those who are negligent be corrected according to their faults. It is proper for a good and devout religious to do violence to his evil inclined nature, to submit spontaneously to discipline, and not to overlook any disorder. For he who loves discipline is wise and will be enriched with many virtues. But he who hates corrections is foolish and will lack honor. Notice the habits of the disciplined monk: he is not light in his words, nor does he look from one side to the other, but walks in the fear of God and does his works diligently, keeping silence and loving the quietness of the cell. He does not murmur, he

does not speak evil of anyone, but entrusts all judgment to God, placing himself before his eyes, and does not speak of things that have not been entrusted to him, so as to devote himself more freely to himself; for he is foolish in the extreme who neglects his own things and meddles in the things of others. Keep, therefore, discipline everywhere, and you will have great peace and glory. ^ . Seek to avoid what is unworthy. Do promptly what pleases God, and do not break the discipline of the order so as not to displease men. He who works against his conscience and offends God because of men is foolish. For he who does not do his duty dishonors God by transgressing the law. If you see any one doing negligently, correct him as a brother, and lead him to amendment, but do not follow his error, nor love him so much that you consent with him in evil: lest you fall with him and perish. Everyone who is zealous for the discipline of the order and receives corrections willingly and cheerfully, will obtain from God a special grace, and on the day of his departure from the body he will not fear evil tidings, but will rejoice with the elect for the reward of his labor, according to the words of Christ: Well done, good and faithful servant; because you have been faithful in a little, enter into the joy of your Lord (Mt 25:23). He who is negligent and careless offends God and men; and he is worse than the paralytic who lay on the stretcher: for the latter suffered from a defect of nature, but the former is overcome by the inertia of the heart. It is of more virtue to subdue the passions than to drive away the demons. And it is more charitable to admonish the sluggish than to give alms. What fervor can there be in one to whom prayer causes weariness and who likes to chat? None at all. For if he were on fire within, he would outwardly avoid useless conversations. But how can one be inflamed in the fervor of the spirit? By frequently doing violence to bad habits and maintaining the rigor of the order in the way that has been appointed for him. The lukewarm one always complains of the heaviness of

discipline; the fervent one embraces it with joy. But you say: “I am afraid of breaking my head and becoming too weak*. What do you say, lukewarm and dissolute? You do not know what you suffer; you fear the small, and do not fear the great; you fear the pain of the body, and do not fear remorse.

IV. Cloister discipline

635

Are you afraid to fast, afraid to watch, afraid to keep silence, and not afraid of being burned in the fire, tormented by demons and excluded from the kingdom of God? Vain is this fear: to think often of the little affliction of the body, to examine only the present evils, and not to dwell on those things which eternally save or condemn. Turn to your heart; turn to God who created you; wait upon Him and He will help you. If you cannot serve Him healthy, serve Him weak, and He will crown you with roses and softest lilies with the holy martyrs in heaven, because you endured on earth pains and fatigues. Therefore, for a little love of the corruptible life, do not admit illicit things; do not seek the consolations of the world; turn away from impertinent conversations; devote yourself to sacred studies; keep discipline; subdue the flesh; fulfill obedience and you will save your soul, according to the word of Christ: He who hates his soul in this world, keeps it for eternal life (Io 12:25). Do not be familiar with the undisciplined; do not learn his lightness and be like him to the confusion of your order. Unite yourself to the religious of good morals and to the truly devout, so that you may always be edified in the good. A single undisciplined and chattering person disturbs many, and he who reproves him works very well. Such a one should be corrected and rebuked many times so that he will leave his weaknesses and return to devout exercises. Let no one make an evil

excuse for another; on the contrary, let him think of his own salvation; and let him see to it that the time given him is spent fruitfully, as St. Paul says: While there is still time, let us do good to all (Gal. 6:10). He who diligently observes discipline and gives good example to others in the convent does good for all. Blessed is the religious who strives to be victorious in everything, for he will be crowned for all that he suffers for Christ. To maintain the vigor of spiritual discipline, St. Paul exhorts his disciples, saying: “Take heed to what is true, what is honorable, what is just, what is pure, what is lovely, what is praiseworthy, what is commendable, what is virtuous, what is praiseworthy. To this be attentive and practice what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me (Phil 4:8-9). You see how solicitous St. Paul was for the observance of discipline, and to give good example to his successors. Indeed, he who loves discipline in himself and in others accumulates for himself great merit in heaven.

Chapter 2

OF THE VARIOUS TEMPTATIONS AND ATTEMPTIONS OF THE DEVIL In every place the devil lays snares for the good and devout, but especially for religious who are gathered in an order under discipline. For this reason, the first pastor of the holy Church, St. Peter, puts the faithful on their guard, saying: Keep watch, because your enemy the devil, like a roaring lion, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; but resist him strong in the faith (1 Pet. 5:8-9). For this reason St. John also cries out in the Apocalypse, warning us: Woe to the earth and to the sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath (Rev 12:12). Truly, the devil tempts the servants of God more fiercely to overthrow the excellence of the religious state; and he attacks them more assiduously than the laity, because he is envious of the splendor of the sanctity of the devout who live in continence. He knows, in fact, that in heaven those who live

more purely in the world will be rewarded more highly. Therefore, the stronger they are

temptations, if they resist manfully and overcome themselves, so much the more glorious will they be before God in the future, because they fought valiantly. Ever since the devil was cast out of heaven by his pride, he has not ceased to circle the earth, seeking whom he might deceive by evil insinuations and wound by morbid delectation, in order to make him lose the grace of God and drag him, finally, with him into eternal damnation. And as he once tempted the first man in paradise and the children of Israel in the wilderness, so now he tempts and persecutes the religious in the cloister, that they may live remissly and break his laws; that they may resist their superiors and disobey them, so that, depraved by these contagions, they may lose their heavenly glory, and he may have cause to accuse them severely at the judgment. We must therefore be watchful at all times and cautious in every place, lest Satan find the servants of God sluggish and unarmed, for he never sleeps nor grows weary; on the contrary, he harasses them right and left. He easily surprises the lazy; and these are the ones who work little and want to eat well. He immediately wounds the unarmed; and these are the ones who seldom pray and keep very little of the sacred reading in their hearts. Those who wander, he corrupts with enticements; those who are idle, he fetters with fables, so that they neglect their duties and hinder others. Even those who do well he turns them away from the well begun; those who want to pray or read he makes sleep; those who strive to rise up he keeps in bed. There is no place in the cloister that Satan, the enemy of the religious, fails to visit, in order

to snatch and lose even one sheep from the flock of Christ. Therefore the heavenly shepherd blows with a loud voice the trumpet of salvation, and says to his sheep: Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation (Me 14:38). As if he were saying: The ravening wolf is circling around your dwelling place; the serpent of old is cunningly seeking a loophole to enter into the innermost recesses of your heart and to bite you out of anger or to caress you out of foolishness. Be on your guard, therefore, and be alert and watchful in heart and word day and night, for war threatens you on every side, and nothing is safe under heaven, and many adversaries ready for battle send out sharp arrows and lay snares at your feet that you may fall from the straight path and turn aside from the holy purpose. Nevertheless, stand firm and fight valiantly for your souls. I, the Lord, will be with you. Observe with caution what kind of images are presented to you, whether of the world or of the flesh. Close the door of your heart and arm yourselves with the sign of the cross so that the devil may not enter, for he comes to tempt you and induce you to consent to sin, so that you may offend God and lose his grace. O you religious and friends of God, beware of crafty and deadly diabolical insinuations, and do not dwell on them; but, on the contrary, as soon as you feel unlawful movements, turn your minds away and call on the name of the Lord, grieving over the evil that has been presented to you, and think of God and spiritual things, and exercise yourselves in the holy sorrow of your sins. If you do so, the devil will flee in confusion, and the holy angels sent to comfort you will come near and comfort your hands against the powers of the air. Therefore abide in the fear of God and watch always for the beginning of temptation, and pray with groanings of the heart in a spirit of humility. Do not think great or praiseworthy things of yourselves, but acknowledge yourselves to be truly frail men and unprofitable servants. Whatever good you know and do, attribute it not entirely to your own industry and labor, but

to divine grace and mercy. The devil fears and avoids no one so much as the humble and self-abasement.

to himself. V against no one has he so much power as against the proud and the self-conceited. Beware, therefore, of pride if you do not wish to suffer ruin. If you do not wish to be deceived and supplanted, do not exalt yourself or boast vainly. However much the monastery may be in solitude, you are not, however, free from temptation, for the devil tempted Christ, who was filled with the Holy Spirit, in the desert. Therefore, as long as you live it is necessary to fight against the wiles of the devil and your own passions. And if ever the devil leaves you alone for any length of time, he does it to deceive you; so that, when you are helpless and reluctant, he may suddenly and unexpectedly overthrow you. He tempts you in the choir so that you pray with weariness and pay little attention to the meaning of the words. He brings to mind the images of external things that you have previously seen and heard in order to take away the fruit of prayer and make your chorus heavy. He tempts you in the refectory to eat more or more exquisitely or to murmur about some defect. It tempts you in the cell so that you may work idly, or seldom pray, or read little, and leave early, and go off to chat, and return late. He tempts you in time of silence to speak without permission; and if it is possible to speak, he immediately stimulates you to that which is vain and harmful, so that you defile your conscience and offend your brother. Therefore, watch and pray always to God that he may give you graces against the wiles of Satan, who lies in wait for those consecrated to God both in prosperous and adverse things. Chapter 3

OF MAN'S TRUE CONVERSION TO GOD, WHO IS THE HIGHEST GOOD Many are our deviations from God, the highest good, because, through our own iniquity and great frailty, we soon slip into desiring inferior and earthly things, which can neither satisfy us nor remain with us. It is therefore necessary to turn daily to God, from whom we often turn away to ourselves by loving ourselves disorderly, or by looking vainly at some creatures or using them badly and worrying more about temporal things than about divine things. Many times we also feel great antipathy for the wholesome things that favor or foster discipline, and we desire to have those that are comfortable and pleasant, without noticing what our conscience tells us and how much our turning away from him toward these outdated things displeases God. And even if we know of someone who is just and good, if he goes against our will and proposes to introduce some restriction in favor of virtue, we begin to oppose him tenaciously and to think lowly of him, and we say that we should not listen to him. And this error is found in the majority of religious, who wish to follow their inclination against the good pleasure of God and the opinion of their superior, without remembering the grave judgment that awaits them if they trust in themselves and in their own strength more than they should. This comes from the pride of the heart and from the temptation of the devil, who seeks to draw into the laxity of the flesh those who struggle to profit in the spirit. For it is not enough for the true conversion of man to change the secular habit, which can be done in a day or an hour, but true and religious conversion is accomplished when one strives to overcome his vices and devotes himself with great fervor to the virtues. We must, therefore, as soon as possible, those of us who wear a habit

We must, as religious, turn our hearts away from all things material and visible and raise ourselves to contemplate the invisible face of our Creator, and always tend to the things of heaven; and every day and at all times, whenever the mind wanders, humbly beg forgiveness and sigh with the prophet: Turn to us, O God, our Savior, and turn away your wrath from us (Ps 84:5). When we do this, God gladly receives our supplications and the holy angels in heaven rejoice, because we turn wholeheartedly to God our Lord, who is the happiness of all the saints. Satan, on the contrary, tries to draw the religious soul away from this supreme good and to turn it away on various occasions and temptations. He stirs up thoughts of pride, anger, gluttony, impurity, envy, discord, hardness, falsehood, blasphemy, distrust, faintheartedness, inconstancy, despondency, negligence and many other evils which it would take too long to enumerate; And he endeavors to withdraw her from the sweetness of heavenly things and angelic purity, and to keep her for a long time in low and vain things, so that, because of the excessive difficulty of overcoming temptations, she may cease to seek and invoke God, and thus postpone, as if from weariness of good, all spiritual profit and all labor for the guarding of the heart. These are the works of the enemy, cast out from the face of the God of heaven. (For being utterly separated from God, he plots all sorts of evils against those who do good; especially when they want to pray and inwardly recollect themselves and ask pardon for their offenses. Ungodly in the highest degree, he craftily lies in wait for all the good. He subtly weaves his web throughout the world and spreads it everywhere. He tempts monks and nuns, subjects and prelates, to see if he can catch even one fish on the hook of concupiscence and transfer him from the cloistered pool to the shore of the century, where he suffers the contagion of evil by sight, hearing and by the multitude of mad and vain joys. Therefore, let the religious, servant of God, diligently guard

his ways and restrain the ramblings of both mind and imagination, lest he lose the highest good, which cannot be possessed with vain things. As soon as he feels himself dragged and hindered, let him return to God by prayer and contrition, and pray and say with the holy David: My eyes are ever on the Lord, for it is He who draws my feet out of the net (Ps 24:15). For just as by sinning and delighting in creatures, man is made a prisoner of the devil, so by repentance he turns to God and regains his freedom. By sinning he remains dirty, cold and arid; but by repenting, praying and weeping over the faults he has committed, he is cleansed, enkindled and receives the sprinkling of divine grace. And many times, chastened by the ease with which he slipped, he is instructed and strengthened to be more cautious and rigorous. He is truly converted and does not bear in vain the name and the habit of a religious who dies completely to the world and likes to live only for Christ; he who refers to God, in the last analysis, all his works and thoughts; He who in all his words and deeds seeks and desires only the honor of God and the praise of his name, not wishing to retain anything for his own love and comfort; he who offers and elevates himself with all the good that is done in heaven and on earth, giving immense thanks to God, the supreme good, from whom all created good descends and flows.

Chapter 4

OF THE HUMBLE SUBJECT'S OBEDIENCE TO HIS PRELATE It belongs to the good subject to embrace joyfully the gift of obedience and to withhold nothing of his own will, but, after the example of Christ, to entrust himself willingly into the hands of God and His prelate, for this is the most pleasing gift that he can offer to God. Let every good subject, therefore, beware of judging his prelate rashly and curiously scrutinizing his ways; on the contrary, let him always interpret his words and deeds in a good sense. And if less useful things and even real defects appear in him, do not despise him or argue with him, but excuse him and bear with him piously; and if necessary, warn him charitably by himself or by someone more suitable, because he carries a great burden on himself. Pray also for him in secret that God may keep and comfort him, for there is no one in the whole house who has so much solicitude for everyone every day. Truly, rarely will a prelate be found who can satisfy everyone or please everyone, according to his desire. Therefore, he must be helped and honored by the subjects and endured by all, and excused before the imperfect monks, who soon become angry when something is resisted and denied them. He is certainly the one who has to bear with everyone, who is present at the mouth of all, and to whom is easily imputed what is wrongly done or judged for what is half done. But this is not virtuous, nor is it the desire of the envious who seek in the prelate only what they can throw in his face. One should neither give credit nor agree with him who slanders his superior and seeks reasons for not obeying him, not wanting to submit to the vicar of Christ, who speaks through the mouth of God for the health of the subject, constituted under the power of the superior. The one who persistently abounds in his own sense, so that he puts his own opinion

before the superior’s ordination, thinks very proudly and acts dangerously. But he who is attentive to the merit of holy obedience and thinks of the obedience of Christ and the life of the saints, strives without delay or murmuring to do what he has been commanded, without trying to find out why he has been commanded, but even what seems to be an insignificant trifle is worthily elevated by the virtue of obedience and turned to the profit of his soul. This indeed is most praiseworthy and honest and most meritorious among meritorious deeds and most safe for one’s own conscience. For it is proper for subjects to submit humbly to the advice of their elders and to obey their prelates with docility. He who does this pleases God, and will be loved by his prelate, who will give a favorable account of him before the tribunal of God. Such a subject greatly lightens the burden of his prelate and looks most wisely to himself in the future so as not to be in great danger at the judgment of God. He who desires to attain the highest perfection soon must first of all strive to perfect himself in obedience. Great and exalted virtue is simple and pure obedience, which knows no late fulfillment nor seeks arguments to exempt itself, but fulfills the commands without complaining. For this a great crown is due to him, and he will receive the palm with the martyrs, because he fought bravely and subdued nature, obeying to the point of death. For it is a hard thing to overcome completely and to deny oneself for obedience. This is the highest praise of monks, the most beautiful crown of all good religious^,

Happy and venerable obedience, preached and observed by our Lord Jesus Christ, eternal wisdom of the Father, with these words: For I have come down from heaven, not to do

my own will, but the will of him who sent me (Mt 6:38). And when he was going to the place of the passion, he prayed in this way with absolute abnegation of his own will: Father, if this cup cannot pass without my drinking it, your will be done (Mt 26:42). The Blessed Mother of Jesus, the Virgin Mary, also showed it promptly and fully expressed it when she responded to the angel with these words: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word” (Le 1:38). Thus it is fitting, thus should the good subject strive to do and say before the superior with humility and reverence: “Here am I, Father; as you say and resolve, so will I do according to my strength”. Truly, this virtue is preferred to victims and gifts; it erases past evils, preserves from future evils, lessens punishment, and saves from eternal damnation. Through it, man is made pleasing to God and so familiar to Christ that he deserves to be his brother: Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother (Mt 12:50). How precious is this virtue in subjects, which places them before God as a safeguard against the faults of which they are accused.1 Anyone who chooses and maintains this virtue is surely on his way to the homeland which Adam and Eve lost by their disobedience, and which Christ and Mary recovered for us by obeying. This holy and simple obedience is more profitable than profound doctrine; it is more useful than power and more secure than dignity or prelacy. And if obedience is found together with knowledge and dignity, that soul is to be highly commended and considered very great among the saints. The example of perfect obedience shines forth in the patriarch Abraham, who for obedience to God went forth from his country and kindred and showed himself ready to immolate his beloved only son. For this he deserved to be blessed by the heavenly voice and to be named father of many nations and honored for all ages. To this most useful virtue of obedience St. Paul exhorts in his epistle to the Hebrews: Obey your pastors and be subject to them, for they watch over your souls, as one

who is to give an account of them, so that they may do it with joy and without groaning, for that would be unfortunate for you (Hebr 13:17). This holy obedience, which is absolutely necessary for salvation, is recommended by the many witnesses of the Old and New Testaments, and by the most devout examples of the saints. The laws and codes of all peoples dictate that such obedience must be shown to elders and superiors with humble submission and reverence. Let him, therefore, who finds it hard to obey and tries many times to excuse himself or cunningly turn away from obedience, consider what subjects he would like to have; certainly good and humble, and not^ rebellious. Let him try, then, to be such for his prelate as he would like to have them if he were elected to preside. Let him learn first to submit humbly to another and to obey reverently in order to be worthy to instruct others and to be able to govern usefully, and not be caught with a great responsibility before God if he demands of others that which he does not fulfill. How can the state of religion and the rule of the convent be preserved in the cloisters, if the subjects do not obey their prelates? For if all want to rule and each tries to do as he pleases, there will be great confusion and disturbance; discipline will perish, dissolution will grow, the fear of God will recede and the freedom of the flesh will reign. Indeed, where obedience is not observed and the prelate is little venerated, good government falls to the ground.

Chapter 5

Although man is easily inclined to the exterior, and his sensitive appetite takes with pleasure some comfort from creatures, he should try to return promptly to himself by contrition of spirit, lest he lose more grace interiorly, because he becomes inconstant and slippery if he follows his desires to see and have curiosity. Force yourself, with violence if necessary, to enter into the depths of your heart, for if there is no peace within, you will profit nothing by what you get externally from earthly things. It is very useful for the peace and custody of the heart to order your external occupations discreetly, reserving for yourself some spiritual exercises, so that you may know when to read, when to pray, when to work, when to meditate, when to be quiet, when to speak, when to be alone, when to be with others; and do all things at the proper time with good deliberation, and never be free from some holy work or some pious exercise. There are certain things which you must avoid altogether: frivolous conversations and the news of the age, dealings with women, familiarities with the young, visits from friends, greetings from guests, for these distract the mind and stain the conscience, and he who enjoys such things impoverishes himself of internal goods* There are others which you must energetically preserve: the rigor of observance in silence, in fasting, in vigils, and in the other austerities that look to the punishment of the body, for if the body is not subject to the restraint of monastic discipline, it becomes contrary to the spirit and arouses in the soul many temptations that blind the understanding and cool the fervor of devotion. There are things which you must patiently endure: the lack of temporal things, the misunderstanding of the good, the vexations of enemies, the infirmities of the body, the habits of the imperfect, the severity of words, the lack of interior

consolation and the afflictions of friends, in which man is tested and purified as in fire; and if he uses these adversities well, they will bring him the merit of a great eternal reward. There are also things which you must reject at once: manifest vices and sins contrary to the commandments of God and to the virtues. Sometimes they insinuate themselves hiddenly under the form of lawful dispensation; but, many times, concupiscence or lukewarmness stimulate beyond the limit of necessity; whence it is necessary to guard against the poison of seduction. Therefore, according to the counsel of the wise man, guard your heart with all diligence lest anything impure should enter in to offend God. IF you notice that you are being dragged away by some vice, apply the remedy in due time, lest, by deferring it too long, the passion increase and become worse. There is no vice so serious that it cannot be cured if the wound is made manifest and the advice of the spiritual physician is sought. But it is one thing to know the remedy and another to apply it. Many know very well what is to be done or avoided, but they do not put diligence into the custody of the heart and mouth; and for this reason, at the slightest opportunity, they are dragged back to the vices of old. In this life, which is all temptation, it is necessary to struggle every day, to make firm resolutions and to implore the divine grace, until this lubricious life of interior struggle is over. Religious life

There is no remedy to be found here on earth that will completely cure all the diseases of vices, so that no movement of concupiscence will be felt, since this is a gift of the future beatitude promised to the saints. Nevertheless, with the help of grace, sinful movements can be restrained and the occasions of sin avoided and the stains contracted

in the course of the day can be washed away by penance. It is a great work to guard against the vices that invade us and not to be affected by external sensible things. For either the Creator or the creature moves you; and so, according to the state of the mind, the affections of the heart and the members of the body are easily moved, and nothing is done in word or deed that does not proceed from the root of the heart. The good man brings good things out of the good treasure of his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil treasure of his heart, says the Lord (Mt 12:35). You must therefore be very careful to guard your heart and consider what thoughts and desires you have within you, so that you may quickly reject the bad and follow the good, and always and diligently think of the greater good of your soul, according to the words of the prophet: My life is in constant danger, but I have not forgotten your law (Ps 118:109). If this is what the holy King David did, possessing the care of the whole kingdom, how much more must the religious, who has made profession to God, always keep in mind, regardless of all earthly concerns, the eternal salvation of his soul! Solitude and silence, study, reading, prayer, meditation, and not wanting to know anything of the things of the world are very helpful to the purity of the heart, because often the bad things heard are more harmful than the good things read in books. For there is hardly any action so good that it is not mixed with some evil. And in every word or deed the enemy lays his snares to draw back the mind from its inward dedication. He certainly knows the human heart, and knows very well that, if it does not delight in good, it soon slips into evil. Chapter 6

Put a lock on your mouth, for you must give an account of every idle word (Mt 12:36). If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue," says the Apostle James, "he is deceived, for his religion is vain (Iac 1:26). For from the carelessness of the tongue many evils are wont to come,

from which the silent man is free, and has no need to confess his guilt. See to it, therefore, that you voluntarily keep silent and beware of idle words, for prolonged conversation extinguishes devotion, breeds dissipation, wastes time, harms the conscience, and offends others. Silence is an ancient rule of the religious introduced by the Holy Fathers and observed with great diligence. Whoever breaks it lightly offends God and all the saints. Christ said: Let your word be your word; yes, yes; no, no. Whatever goes beyond this, proceeds from evil (Mt 5:37). Accordingly, he teaches us to speak briefly and plainly when it is permitted; but when it is not, we must be silent. If you want to keep silence well, flee from the crowd and go to a hidden place to pray, or to a cell to read or write. It would be better for you to read a psalm or recite the Sunday prayer for your sins or for your friends than to waste time chatting about profane things. To do nothing and chat about idle things is not to be called true recreation, but rather execration, when one forgets the work of God and forgets the work of God.

they talk nonsense. Go therefore to your work, and labor in the vineyard of God for the penny of eternal life, lest the master of the house reproach you, saying, “Why do you sit here all day idle? (Mt 20:6). Scripture praises the one who does well, Christ rewards the faithful servant, reproves the lazy and wayward, and commands that the grace granted be taken away from him and given to the one who works more earnestly. For the time will come when you will no longer be able to work, and perhaps not even to speak a single word because of serious illness. Thus you must be forewarned and always tremble at the last hour, lest it find you empty-handed. For this reason Jesus said to his disciples: I must

work the works of him who sent me while it is day; when night comes, no one can work any more. As long as I am in the world, I am the world’s you” (John 9:4-5). Take, then, the example of Jesus Christ, St. Paul, St. Anthony, St. Augustine, St. Jerome, St. Benedict, St. Francis, St. Dominic and all the Holy Fathers who wrote the rules of the monks and founded a religion. Truly, these worked hard in the order, and for eternal life they punished their bodies with many fasts, in solitude and silence, with vigils and prayers, and with other observances and labors very pleasing to God, in the service of the Lord. What, then, do you think that by chattering and going to and fro you will obtain the most glorious crown, which the saints of God have attained by shedding their blood and enduring most grievous torments? Not at all. But if you do not do penance,” says Jesus, “you will all likewise perish (Le 13:3). A harsh sentence, but useful for your amendment and to keep discipline. Correct your life and you will not fear punishment, but will have eternal glory.

Chapter 7 OF THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE CELL AND SOLITUDE He who loves the cell and dwells in it at ease, is free from many sins and temptations. The more assiduously one dwells in it, the more it pleases and is loved. The more carelessly it is kept and rarely entered, the more it is feared and causes weariness. Blessed is he who loves it and dwells in it, for the anointing of the Holy Spirit will instruct him. Blessed is he to whom it has been given to dwell in the cell and who perseveres in it to the end of his life. Woe to him who, at the slightest opportunity, abandons it and likes to be outside: he will soon be seduced and surprised and harmed. For not having sought it with eagerness, many were thrown into the works of the world at various times and were lost in a bad way. Woe to us if we cannot persevere in it until it brings us ripe fruit! This is how man should conduct himself: as if he had to go to the grave every day, because for him the cell is not boredom, but a dwelling place of peace. And

just as for the constant man the cell is a paradise, so for the restless man it is a prison and a trap. It is a good and praiseworthy thing to be joyfully imprisoned there by God. For many holy martyrs were imprisoned and condemned for Christ's sake. Choose, therefore, to be bound there spontaneously, that you may be equal to the merits of the saints. Be impelled by the fear of God rather than by iron; by charity rather than by avowed necessity. If love does not hold you back, at least the fear of God. You are not badly bound if, spurred on by the fear of hell, you shut yourself up to penance for your sins. They are badly bound who seek to wander

with the heart and with the spirit. He who is consecrated to God and is not inclined to go out of the cell is well confined. If you want to remain in it, never be idle. Acidity and idleness drive the chattering monk out of the cell. He who loves silence and works calmly will be a good custodian of the cell. If you are assailed by the tedium of the cell, agonize in it for Christ, and do not allow yourself to be thrown out of it for any reason. If you remain constant, soon your prison will become a paradise of pleasure. The saints, held in prisons for Christ's sake, were often visited by angels and abundantly consoled. To you also, if you patiently confine yourself in the cell for Christ's sake, there will soon come, by the mercy of God, heavenly light, the joy of a good conscience and great spiritual profit. He who resides in the cell is free from many dangers. He who goes from one place to another is exposed to many others. The advantages of the cell cannot be sufficiently explained, nor can the disadvantages of those who live outside the cell be sufficiently explained. He who keeps his cell is like he who

keeps his mouth: he does not hear murmurings, he does not perceive murmurings, he does not see vanities, he is not drawn into lightness. The good lover of the cell either reads, or prays, or moans, or meditates, or writes, or corrects books, or does any other good thing. The good lover of the cell is a citizen of heaven, a friend of God, a companion of angels, a knower of secrets, an expeller of demons, a warrior against vices, a despiser of worldly things, free from cares, a possessor of rest and peace, a lover of the Scriptures, a speculator of truth, a taster of purity, continual in prayer, recollected in holy meditation, and a destroyer of all digression. Think that you and God alone are in the world, and you will have great tranquility in your heart. Remember that the angel found Mary praying in her room; not outside, talking with men. For he who desires to know the heavenly secrets must keep away from men. Thus, indeed, did Moses, who, having forsaken the multitude of men, remained alone with God on the mountain, that he might be worthy to receive the law of the Lord, Read these things sometime, that it may be sweet for you to dwell in the cell.

Chapter 8 CHOIR CELEBRATION

AND OF THE DIVINE OFFICE’.

The choir is the sacred place of God and of the holy angels; there the divine office is celebrated in the presence of the ministers of the Church, who sing hymns with reverence and devotion. Like the angels in heaven, so the religious are ordained in the choir. The mission of the angels is to praise God always; that of the religious is to chant and pray attentively. Try to be and sing in the choir as if you were in the midst of the angels. Remember Jesus, your beloved Lord, lying in the manger, or hanging on the cross, or seated at the right hand of the Father, as if you were standing and singing before Him. Let Him be in your heart and on your lips to utter openly and clearly the words of the Holy Spirit; by whose work and grace the office has been ordained. Put Jesus on your right hand and Mary on your left, and all the saints around them. Let all your brethren be to you as the angels of God.

And with whom you sing now on earth, trust that you will sing also in heaven. A pure life and a clear conscience rejoices in the divine praises. The lukewarm man prays in sleep and weariness. If you overcome laziness and turn your heart away from distractions, you pave the way to devotion, and you will always rejoice in the divine praise. Many cares choke the word of God and long colloquies cause distraction of the mind. What a man does before, this very thing often comes to him afterwards in prayer” There the enemy does

not come except to sow tares. The devotee of the choir looks only for God and for himself, as if he were transported and elevated in the heavenly choir. When you have finished the things that make up the divine office, do not give yourself to the exterior, lest you lose the grace you have obtained through prayer; but rather you should concentrate again after expressing the desires of your lips and remain oblivious to all noise in a greater thanksgiving, ruminating on what you have heard sung. What is the use of praising God for an hour if in the next hour you begin to deal with profane and useless things? Do not compromise the precious fruit of your singing and the work of God's work by vain jokes and foolishness; for in that way the devotion that was kept under the restraint of silence soon disappears. And when you feel tired by some long office, think that, once finished, you will fly to heaven" And if this does not help you, remember that it is more bearable to watch and sing for three or four hours than to burn only one hour in purgatory. It is certainly of great merit to attend the sacred canonical hours and to recite the praises of God with joy, in the company of many brethren in the holy church. If we cannot pray without interruption or contemplate with the perfect ones, we should at least put all diligence into certain hours destined for this, to attentively and devoutly psalmize. In so holy a service not only do you gain, deserving eternal reward from the Lord, but you can also be useful to all Christ's faithful and above all to the deceased, imploring grace and forgiveness in the canonical hours of the day and at Masses; and all the more fully the more assiduously and fervently you pray for all. Any word spoken attentively will not fail to have its just reward. Just as you will be severely punished for all that you recite with negligence. It is indeed no light sin to stand in the presence of God and the saints with a distracted heart and to attend too little to the sacred words. What an irreverence it is to be thinking of sayings or deeds without transcendence where, all worries aside, it is only fitting to

attend to the divine works and arcana. In this the true interior religious is known: if he occupies himself with fervor in the praises of God, nor does he like anything but to think or do the things that most please God, and to be in communion with the angelic spirits. And this is to pray always, namely, to praise, bless and glorify God with all our heart, as David says in the psalm: I will bless the Lord always; his praise shall always be in my mouth (Ps 33:2). Therefore, whoever is listless or silent or absent from the praises of God, is not his friend, nor a citizen of heaven; for the angels are always praising God, and they sing in unison the holy, holy, holy, in praise of the Most Holy Trinity. No wonder they are also called birds of the air, because with the sound of their wings they invite us to sing. Among all the works of the faithful soul, there is no occupation so fruitful and so fruitful as that of the birds of heaven.

Woe, then, to those who do not burn with divine love, but turn to other people’s occupations and neither pray nor allow others to pray, and where they ought to make amends for their sins, they add others to those already committed! Such are those who enter late in church and leave first; those who love short Masses and exercise themselves in long meals; those who delight in pastimes and amusements and hardly give thanks to God for his benefits, because they enjoy feeding the body more than the soul. The good religious consecrated to the service of God will not act in this way; but rather, conscious of all the benefits of God, which are infinite, let him seek to spend the night with Jesus in prayer, singing hymns and psalms, offering the sacred hosts, persisting in devout meditations, and always lifting up his heart to God. Chapter 9

OF THE DISCRETION TO BE KEPT IN EVERY SPIRITUAL EXERCISE The servant of God must do all things under the control of discretion. Try, then, to follow a royal path, so that, neither too condescending to the flesh nor too rigid by fervor, you turn away from the end. If you want to keep a stable order of good living, walk in the middle of two extremes, so that you do not claim by arrogance things that are above your strength, nor omit by inertia things that you can do comfortably. God does not ask of you the destruction of your body, but the curbing of your vices. He does not demand impossible things, but things useful for your salvation. He gives sound advice, provides what is necessary for life, so that you may make good use of the service of the body for the benefit of the soul and in nothing exceed the measure of discretion. For to run today, and tomorrow to be given up, is not to profit in the way of God, but to confuse oneself and to hinder progress. To desire now to have nothing and tomorrow to take what is superfluous is not to love poverty, but to foster passion. To refuse now what is necessary and tomorrow to seek the extraordinary is not to abstain, but to excite gluttony. To refuse now to eat what is presented to you and to murmur tomorrow about the lack of food is not a sign of an abstinent soul, but a sign of impatience. To read or write so much now that a headache follows is not to nourish the soul, but to become impotent for other good works. Today not to speak a word and tomorrow to become dissolute or to break silence, is not to be zealous for order, but to scandalize many in the order. To sing so loudly today that tomorrow you cannot speak or hardly open your mouth to sing, is not to praise God, but to disturb others in the choir. Whatever exceeds moderation and does not observe discretion neither pleases God nor lasts long. It is therefore necessary in every spiritual work, in order to carry out properly the action undertaken, that you keep the common rule and avoid every note of singularity, and that in doubts and perplexities you follow the advice of the

superior; and with the measure of discretion you fulfill obedience without deceit. To be able to be always in the supreme degree of devotion is not proper to human frailty, and to be too much inclined to the exterior and too agitated to the exterior.

for what is earthly is not proper to the spiritual profit, but the loss of all religiosity. And if, by a special grace, you have been visited and inebriated with God, remember that you are a man, not an angel; that you still carry the burden of the flesh, not the stole of the soul; recognize that grace has been given to you, but that it has not been born with you. Beware, therefore, of wanting to know more than you ought to know; rather mix joy with fear, and do not pretend to things too high, lest afterwards, humiliated, you be involved in despair. When you work externally and deal with necessary problems, do not allow yourself to be completely absorbed by visible things; on the contrary, elevate yourself to God by frequent meditation. Think for what purpose these external things are made and exercised, for they should help the servant of God rather than hinder him; inasmuch as, when earthly things are perfectly moderated, he will tend more easily to the eternal and invisible things. But to possess the virtue of discretion in acting and the gift of wisdom in resting, you will attain it better by praying devoutly and asking God humbly than by relying on your own effort and labor. Chapter i or

PRAYER OF PERFECT CONSUMATION IN VIRTUES Lord, most holy Father, who hast made all things in number, weight and measure, and wilt that every rational creature should acknowledge the submission which is due to thee, and,

above all, who loveth and cherishest spontaneous service in thy servants; I beseech thee to direct my spontaneous acts according to thy good pleasure, and bend to the rule of thy eternal disposition the rebellious movements of my flesh, and grant that I may break entirely with my own will. Order all my affections in such a way that I may reject from the beginning the evil ones, strongly retain the good ones, love the pure ones, and learn to contemplate You without a corporeal image. Moderate my earthly and external activities in such a way that I may never adhere completely to them, but may always be able to turn inward and without difficulty ascend to the heavenly ones. Increase in me the desire for eternal things, the love of the holy virtues, the enjoyment of heavenly things, so that you, O Lord God, may be more honored thereby and that I may receive salutary profit. Let not the burden of pride come upon me by your visitation, nor the stench of vainglory agitate me. Do not allow me to be deceived by Satan, nor dragged away by false sweetness, nor driven out of the community by private devotion, nor destroyed by excessive exercise; but grant me to do everything with discretion, to attempt nothing without timely counsel, to walk purely and freely in your presence with fear and reverence, without passion and affection for corruptible things. Grant me to possess a humble and quiet spirit; never to be extroverted and immature; never to cleave to any creature with vicious affection, but to keep my heart pure and peaceful for thee alone, so that, ever looking up to heaven and secretly consecrated to thee, my God, I may not be moved by any visible thing, but may always remain a true despiser of the world. Grant that I may carry out external things in such a way that they may not harm my inner self, but that every work and deed may be done in such a way that I may always remain a true despiser of the world.

I will be helped and guided by your honor to dedicate myself to you more freely. Whatever I do outwardly or whatever I may inwardly understand, grant me to do it simply and purely, for the greater glory of your name and for the love of your most holy will; and grant me to abandon myself readily into your hands in every thing desirable or contrary to nature; to bear patiently the burden of the present life until you ordain the term of my vocation; and to commend you faithfully body and soul to you, my Creator. Remember me, (O God,) in the hour of dire need, and work mercifully with thy servant, for I trust not in my merits, but only in thy infinite pity and mercy. Chapter ii

OF THE LOVE OF GOD AND OF THE NEIGHBOR AND OF THE HATRED OF VICES God is the happiness of the soul, and with no created good is the soul happy, nor truly wise, except by loving God above all things and despising from the heart the things that are beneath God. For this reason, St. Paul says: “I count all things but dung, that I may rejoice in Christ” (Phil. 3:8). Charity is a noble virtue born of God, which makes the soul filled with it heavenly and alien to the world. Charity hates vices, reproves sinful pleasures, persecutes evil and violates nature in order to overcome what is contrary to God and the virtues. Just as water and fire are contrary, so God and the love of the world do not agree. The more one overcomes oneself and corrects one’s faults, the more the love of God grows in him, and the more the affection of the flesh withers and is extinguished. He who behaves badly and does not grieve over this, but remains incorrigible, injures charity and dissipates the good of peace. He is not fit for concord except he who abandons his bad habits, whereby he may offend God and those who dwell with him. If you would have the charity of God and keep peace among the brethren, bend your own will and do nothing out of

pride, but in all things humble yourself. The way to charity is to descend through humility. For he who thinks proudly of himself departs far from charity. Often it is thought to be charity, but it is rather carnality. To drink wine with fruition and to talk with women is carnality. To eat opulently and dress neatly is carnality. To talk much and do little is carnality. To pray seldom and to wander about frequently is carnality. To be quick at table and slow at prayer is carnality. He shows true charity who radically hates the vanity of the world and flees from the world's vanity. In fact, holy charity does not seek earthly consolation in men, but spiritual profit. Charity thinks that the soul is made in the image of God and shuns, as harmful, the flesh, which is inclined to evil. It should not be said that there is charity where there is no zeal for justice and no fervor for discipline. Anyone who truly loves God and his neighbor must not conceal the injury of God and the harm of souls. Peace is good with virtues; with vices, it is always bad. There is a good state and peace in the house where the defects are corrected and the vices are extirpated at once.

Chapter 12

OF ABSTINENCE AND CHASTITY Sober food and drink is health of soul and body. Scarcity teaches to love poverty. Rare virtue; continence in the midst of pleasures. Abundance in temporal things is the occasion of dissensions and the mother of all vices. Charity is safer in poverty than in many riches. Corporal indigence is medicine for the faithful soul. Sorrow of heart prevents dissipation, and the fear of God closes haughty eyes. As unchaste sight harms, so does the hearing of dishonest things. Let the holy soul beware of the nearness of bodies, for the flesh soon affects the flesh. To love the beautiful and to crave the soft does not foster the virtue of chastity. But he who embraces the vile and bitter for the sake of chastity can more easily overcome the flesh; for the more the flesh is repressed, the more the spirit rises. He who withdraws from all contact with the body will receive in the soul the softness of chastity. He who loves solitude will be purer from the stains of the worldly. He who believes that his body is the prison of the soul, will not occupy himself with adorning or displaying it, for it will soon become mud and stench. To consider the exterior of man and to glory in beauty or strength is a vain and vicious thing. The saints lived in much abstinence and discipline of the body, and, instead of the present affliction, they received the consolation of the Holy Spirit. He is not worthy to be consoled by God who delights in transitory goods and grieves over the scarcity of them. He who patiently endures toil and pain in the service of Christ, will receive great reward even for the least that he has suffered. Chastity has many impugners, but those who truly humble themselves and solicitously seek their help from God and cautiously guard their senses, will obtain the victory, following Christ for their leader. Chapter 13

OF THE USEFUL MEDITATION OF THE LIFE AND PASSION OF CHRIST The first exercise and the gentlest consolation that can be had in this life is the life and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ; for both in the active and contemplative life he teaches man perfectly, without error and without many arguments, what is rarely found in the other sciences. Thus, the firmest and surest way to the perfection and illumination of the mind and to attain eternal life is to conform oneself to the Son of God in all his virtues and habits. Learn, therefore, to direct and order all your exercises to his love and honor, and to look upon Jesus as present at all times and in all places, and with much reverence and singular devotion humbly bow your head when you hear and pronounce his most sweet name; bend the knee, and with all the angels and archangels and with the whole company of saints adore, bless and praise his majesty and divinity. Let Christ dwell in your heart by faith and charity means this: never take your mind's eye from his image, always tend toward his good pleasure, and put nothing before his love. Whatever good you hear, say or do, direct it wholly and ultimately to Him, for He is the

source of life, of wisdom and of discipline, for whom no thought is lost in his memory, nor will any prayer addressed to him with groanings be in vain. Take comfort, therefore, in the most holy life of Jesus, imitating in this world, according to your strength, his poverty, humility, patience and contempt. Think how he worked for you from the beginning of his holy birth until his death on the cross, how he suffered for you and spent himself for you, which no angel or saint has ever done; so that Jesus must rightly be loved above all things and praised without ceasing. This was of value to St. Paul above all wisdom and doctrine: to think of Jesus Christ, and of Jesus Christ crucified. And though he had learned or

read many things, yet he had nothing before the greatness of the passion and charity of Christ, which is so immense that no creature can give due thanks to God for the smallest detail. And for this reason, having put aside all the things of the world and having subdued the passions of the flesh, he also said, now full of God: For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain (Phil 1:21). jOh sweet and salutary word, which should never be forgotten! jHow happy and holy the soul that can say this, for whom Christ is all that lives, all that knows, all that does, all that understands, all that believes, all that hopes, all that loves, all that thinks, all that speaks, all that works! Truly and joyfully lives he for whom Christ is all in all and loved singularly above all; who abides in Christ more than in himself; feeling nothing of himself, but resting in Christ sweetly and joyfully. To live thus is to live for Christ, and this is to die to self and to faint and gain to the uttermost; for this is to lose death and to find eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Such a soul, though still in the world and covered by the cloud of the flesh and oppressed by various troubles, yet with the mind dwells above, in heaven, where Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father. Toward which she sighs every day and tends eagerly and does not cease to strive and pray until she possesses it. Chapter 14

OF THE REMEMBRANCE AND INVOCATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY It is fitting to evoke in all things the memory of the most glorious Virgin Mary, blessed Mother of Jesus, to whose merits and supplications you should commend yourself every day and have recourse to her in every need as a son covered with wounds has recourse to his beloved mother. For the sweet name of Mary gives confidence to him who invokes her and calls upon her. And she is ready to say good things to her son Jesus on behalf of the troubled and miserable soul. If Mary, with the saints in heaven, did not pray daily for the world, how could the world, which offends God so much with such grave sins and so little amendment,

still remain? Mary, then, is to be invoked by all Christians: by the just and by sinners, and especially by religious and consecrated persons, who have the purpose of continence and through holy desires long for the things of heaven and want nothing to have or work with the world. But what is to be asked? Ask, first of all, the forgiveness of your sins; then, the virtue of continence and humility, which is a gift most pleasing to God, so that you may always appear humble in the presence of God > desire to be taken for vile and wretched and not to glory in any good, not to go to the world, and not to be taken for the world.

to lose all that you seem to have. You regret that you are so far from the true virtues, from profound humility, from holy poverty, from perfect obedience, from most pure chastity, from most devout prayer, from fervent charity, which all these things were most fully in Mary, the Mother of God. Therefore, throw yourself at her feet as a poor beggar so that you may at least acquire the minimum degree of these virtues, since by your idleness you cannot rise to the maximum. Whatever you desire, humbly ask for it at the hands of Blessed Mary, for by her glorious merits those in purgatory and on earth are helped. Great grace, great glory is hers in Jesus, her Savior, above all the saints in heaven; but all for us who live in the world. Trust, therefore, in the faithfulness of her whose prayers are heard by God, asking nothing, however, nor seeking anything else but what pleases her and her beloved Son and suits your salvation, as they know best. To pray for sinners and to keep your heart in humility is very pleasing to God and to the Blessed Virgin. For she gloried before God only in humility, and of the rest she said nothing; and, in spite of the grace she had, she did

not depart from humility. Let the Virgin Mary, then, pray for us piously, that we may be worthy of God’s grace.

Chapter 15

OF THE HELP OF THE SAINTS TO BE ASKED FOR WITH INSISTENCE Do not forget also to ask insistently for the help of the saints who reign with Christ, because, as you see, you dwell in a valley of tears and live every day among enemies, and even go on pilgrimage far from God. See to it, then, that in the time of your pilgrimage you have friendship with the saints and friends of God, that you have a special familiarity with them, and that you turn away from the knowledge of men and from useless conversations. It is better for you the prayer of a single saint than the visit of all the friends of this world. Christ will comfort you more in silence than the prolonged loquacity of men in great banquets and laughter. The just man has an inner joy that the animal man, greedy for earthly things, does not perceive. If you love poverty and simplicity, Jesus will often keep you company with the holy angels. And if not visibly, he will at least console you invisibly and hiddenly in the Scriptures, Blessed is he who seeks his enjoyment not in men, but in the Holy Letters and in devout supplications to live well and love the things that are above, as did the saints, despising the things that are visible. As each one is, such friends he loves; the devout seek the devout, the chaste the chaste, the saint the saint, the lazy the lazy, the dissolute the dissolute. If, then, you wish to reign in heaven with the saints, you must suffer for God and be humbled in the world with the saints, for it is of little profit to honor the saints with your lips and oppose them with your habits. If you want to please God and the saints, subdue the flesh, bend your will, fight against vices, work to acquire the virtues, consult the lives of the saints, read their doctrine, to be holy with the saints, instructed by the saints, helped by the saints, listened to by the saints, crowned with the saints.

The saints are pleased with the constant groaning towards heaven, the sorrow for sins, the silence of the mouth, the firm purpose of amendment, the desire to advance, the patience in adversities, the thanksgiving for the benefits received. The saints also delight in devout singing, promptness in vigils, praise of the psalmody, confession of sins, asking forgiveness, celebration of the Mass, tears in prayers, and all the observance of regular discipline. He who hinders himself and turns away from these goods loses the grace of devotion, is not pleasing to God nor beloved of the angels, but contrary to God and to all the saints; for he who is of God hears the words of God, willingly reads and writes the words of God; willingly watches and prays; willingly abstains and works; willingly keeps silent and devotes himself to God;gladly he is in the cell and in the church, invoking one or another saint and asking on his knees for the grace to overcome the passions, to resist the temptations with which he is strongly challenged, so that with his devout supplications he may remain devout and, after the agony of this life, reach the mansion of eternal rest, where all the saints reign happily with Christ. The supplication to the saints, which is offered for their honor with pious intention, will certainly not be in vain. For those who with so much solicitude prayed for their enemies when oppressed by them, how much more willingly will they now pray for their devotees, that they may soon join them with heavenly joys, those whom they see laboring every day in the service of God and praying to Christ with many sighs and tears for eternal life. It gives great confidence to pray to the saints, because they too were mortal men and sinners, dragged and oppressed for a long time by various passions; but by the pity and mercy of God freed and justified, they

now give the utmost thanks to Christ for all the evils they managed to overcome, rejoicing in the eternal beatitude they deserved to receive with the help of divine grace.
Chapter 16

THE DESIRE FOR THE HEAVENLY KINGDOM The only and singular desire of the saints in this life was to have nothing in common with this world, but, by their contempt for earthly things, to tend always to the presence of Christ and the consortium of the angels. For this reason also St. Paul, a vehement lover of Christ, perfectly despised all earthly things, and, fainting for heavenly things, said: I desire to die that I may be with Christ (Phil 1:23). This is not the desire of all, but of the perfect, who can say: We are citizens of heaven (Phil 3:20); for very few are found so detached that they put all their affection for eternal things and do not covet earthly riches and honors. But those who, inflamed by the love of God, rejoice in poverty and self-contempt, and incline their hearts to humility and rebuke themselves even severely for small negligence; who take what is necessary for life with sobriety and fear, and want less rather than more, these are the true despisers of the world and the friends of God who run in haste to the homeland, ready to leave the body and come quickly to Christ, having nothing that can delectably keep them in the world. Blessed is the soul that has such an ambition and from day to day adds fervor to its fervor, never ceasing to pray and cry out to Christ until the gate of heaven is opened to it and it enters the kingdom of God promised to all the faithful.

O happy fatherland, where there is perennial joy, supreme peace, transparent knowledge of God, perfect charity, and

consummate happiness! There is better a single day than here a million; for there, no misery; here, much, seldom peace, little knowledge. What can the miserable say of eternal happiness, what can mortals grasp of true eternity and everlasting life, if not under a certain darkness and covered by the veil of the Scriptures? So let the faithful soul, surrounded by the darkness of the world, groan towards the company of the heavenly homeland, raising unceasingly the eyes of the mind there where Christ is in the glory of the Father, reigning for ever and ever. Amen.

Appendix V

CAUTIONS AND WARNINGS OF SAINT JOHN OF THE CROSS AND SAINT TERESA OF JESUS

We offer the reader below the doctrine of the two sublime reformers of Carmel, St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa, in their most celebrated booklets addressed to their friars and nuns. We believe that the reader will be grateful to find here these brief pages, which constitute a true spiritual treasure for souls consecrated to God in the religious life.

CAUTELS WHICH THE ONE WHO WANTS TO BE A TRUE RELIGIOUS AND COME SOON TO PERFECTION MUST ALWAYS BRING BEFORE HIM, ADDRESSED TO THE DISALTED CARMELITES OF BEAS i . The religious who wishes to arrive shortly at holy recollection, silence, spiritual nakedness and poverty of spirit, where the peaceful refreshment of the Holy Spirit is enjoyed, and a soul becomes united with God, and is freed from all the impediments of every creature of this world, and defends itself from the wiles and deceits of the devil, and frees itself from itself, needs to exercise the following documents:

2. With ordinary care, and without any other work or other form of exercise, not failing in what his state obliges him to do, he will go to great perfection in great haste, gaining all the virtues together and arriving at holy peace. 3. To this end, it must first be noted that all the harms that the soul receives arise from the enemies of the soul, which are: the world, the devil, and the flesh. The world is the least difficult enemy. The devil is more obscure to understand. The flesh is more tenacious than all, and its attacks last as long as the old man lasts, 4. To defeat one of these enemies it is necessary to defeat all three, and weakening the one weakens the others; and once all three are defeated, there is no more war left for the soul.

To get rid perfectly of the harm that the world can do to you, you have to use three precautions. FIRST CAUTION

6. The first is that, in regard to persons, you have equal love and equal forgetfulness, whether they are relatives or not, taking your heart as much from the former as from the latter, and even somewhat more from relatives, for fear that flesh and blood may not be enlivened by the natural love that always lives among relatives, which it is always good to mortify for spiritual perfection. Dye them all as strangers, and in this way you fulfill them better than by putting the affection that you owe to God in them. Do not love a person as a stranger, and in this way you fulfill them better than by putting the love you owe to God in them.

You do not know which one God loves more than another, and you do not know which one God loves more. But forgetting them all equally, as it suits you for holy

recollection, you will free yourself from the error of more and less in them. Think nothing of them, neither good nor evil; flee from them as well as you can. And if you do not keep this, you will not know how to be religious, nor will you be able to attain to holy recollection, nor free yourself from the imperfections that this brings with it; and if in this you want to give yourself some license, either in one or the other the devil will deceive you, or you will deceive yourself with some color of good or evil. In doing this there is safety, for otherwise you will not be able to rid yourself of the imperfections and harm that the soul draws from creatures. SECOND CAUTION

7. The second caution against the world is in regard to temporal goods, in which it is necessary, in order to truly free oneself from the harm of this kind and to temper the excess of appetite, to abhor all manner of possessing. You must have no care for it; not for food, not for clothing, not for anything else that is brought up, nor for the day of tomorrow, but you must use this care for something higher, which is to seek the kingdom of God, for the rest, as His Majesty says (Mt 6:33), will be added to us, for he who cares for the beasts will not forget you. By this you will acquire silence and peace of mind. THIRD CAUTION

8. The third caution is very necessary so that you know how to guard yourself in the convent from all harm concerning the religious, which, because many have not had it, not only have they lost the peace and good of their souls, but they have come and ordinarily come to fall into many evils and sins. This is: that you guard yourself, with all vigilance, not to put your thoughts, much less your words, on what happens in the community; what is or has been of any particular religious; not of his condition, not of his treatment, not of his things, even if they are more serious; nor with color of zeal or remedy say anything but to whom it

is right to say it at the proper time; and never be scandalized or wonder at anything you see or understand, trying to keep your soul in the oblivion of all of that. 9. For if you want to look at anything, even if you live among angels, many things will not seem right to you because you do not understand the substance of them. For this reason, take the example of Lot’s wife, who, because she was disturbed at the perdition of the sodomites and looked back to see what was happening, the Lord punished her by turning her into a pillar of salt (Gen 19:26). So that you may understand that God wills that even though you live among demons, you live among them in such a way that you do not even turn your mind to their things, but that you leave them entirely, striving to keep your soul pure and whole in God, without a thought of that or any other thing hindering you. And for this you should know that in convents and communities there is never lacking something to stumble over, because there are never lacking demons who try to overthrow the saints, and God allows it to exercise and test them. And if you do not guard yourself, as it is said, as if you were not at home, you will not be able to be truly religious, even if you do more; nor will you be able to attain to holy nakedness and recollection, nor will you be able to free yourself from the harm that is in this. For if you do not do so, even if you have the most good purpose and zeal, in one or the other, the devil will get you, and you are caught when you give way to distract your soul in some of it. Remember what the apostle James says: If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue, his religion is vain (Iac 1:26). This is understood no less of the interior tongue than of the exterior.

io. The one who aspires to perfection must use three precautions to get rid of the devil, his second enemy. For which it should be noted that among the many precautions that the devil uses to deceive the spiritual, the most common is to deceive them under a kind of good and not under a kind of evil, because he already knows that the known evil they will hardly take. And so you must always be wary of what seems good, especially when obedience is not involved. The security and rightness in this is the advice of the one from whom you should take it. FIRST CAUTION

11. Let the first precaution be that you never, outside of what you are obliged to do by order, move to anything, however good it may seem and full of charity, now for yourself, now for anyone else inside or outside the house, without the order of obedience, and you will gain merit and security with this. Exceed yourself in property and you will flee from the devil and damages that you do not know, of which God will ask you to give an account in due time. And if you do not keep this, in the little and in the much, even if it seems to you that you are right, you will not be able to avoid being deceived by the devil, either in little or in much. And even if it is only that you do not govern yourself in everything by obedience, you already err culpably, because God wants obedience rather than sacrifices (i Reg 15:22), and the actions of the religious are not his own, but of obedience; and if he takes them out of it, they will be asked for them as lost. SECOND CAUTION

12. The second caution, that you never look at the prelate as less than God, whoever the prelate may be, since you have him in his place, and beware that the devil, the enemy of humility, puts his hand in much here. And he warns that the devil, the enemy of humility, puts his hand in here a lot. And so, with great vigilance, take care not to look at his condition, nor at his manner, nor at his trace, nor at his

other ways of proceeding, because you will do yourself so much harm that you will come to change divine obedience into human obedience, moving or not moving, only by the ways that you see visible in the prelate and not by the invisible God, whom you serve in him. And your obedience will be vain, or so much the more unfruitful as you, by the adverse condition of the prelate, are more aggravated; or by the good condition, you rejoice. For I tell you that the devil has ruined a great multitude of religious in perfection by making them look in these ways, and their obedience is of very little value in the sight of God, because he has put them in these things concerning obedience. If in this you do not make yourself strong, so that you come to be given no more that one prelate than another, as far as your particular sentiment is concerned, you will not in any way be able to be spiritual or to keep your vows well. THIRD CAUTION

13. The third caution rightly against the devil is that you always try to humble yourself from the heart: in thought, word and deed; taking pleasure in the good of others as in your own good, and wanting them to come before you in all things; and this from the true heart. And in this way you will overcome evil in good and drive the devil away, and you will have joy of heart; and this you will try to exercise more in those who are less in your favor. And know that, if you do not exercise it in this way, you will not attain to true charity, nor will you profit by it. And always be more friendly to be deceived by everyone than to want to teach those who are less than everyone.

AGAINST THE FLESH 14. The one who wants to overcome himself and his sensuality, his third enemy, must use three

other precautions. FIRST CAUTION

15. The first caution is to understand that you have come to the convent only to be worked and exercised by all; and so, in order to free yourself from the imperfections and troubles that may arise concerning the conditions and dealings of the religious and to take advantage of every occurrence, it is good for you to think that all are officials, as indeed they are, those who are in the convent, to exercise you: Some of them are to work you in word, others in deed, others in thought against you, and that in all this you must be subject as the image is to the one who carves it, and to the one who paints it, and to the one who gilds it. And if you do not keep this, you will not know how to overcome your sensuality and sentiment, nor will you know how to be well in the convent with the religious, nor will you attain holy peace, nor will you be free from many stumbling blocks and evils. SECOND CAUTION

16. The second caution is that you never cease to do works because of the lack of taste or flavor that you find in them, if it is convenient for the service of God that they be done; nor do them only for the taste or flavor that they give you, if it is not convenient to do them as much as the unpalatable ones; because without this it is impossible for you to gain constancy and overcome your weakness. THIRD CAUTION

17. The third caution is that in the exercises, the spiritual man should never set his eyes on what is tasty in them, in order to grasp them and do the exercises for that reason alone; nor should he flee from what is bitter in them, but rather seek out what is hard and unpalatable and embrace it. This is the way to curb sensuality. For otherwise you will neither lose your self-love nor gain the love of God.

FOUR WARNINGS TO A RELIGIOUS PERSON TO ACHIEVE PERFECTION Jesus

i. Your holy charity asked much of me in a few words, for which much time and paper were necessary. Seeing myself, then, lacking in all these things, I will try to summarize myself and put only a few points or warnings, which, in short, contain much; and whoever keeps them perfectly will attain much perfection. He who wishes to be a true religious and to fulfill the state promised to God and to profit in the virtues and enjoy the consolations and gentleness of the Holy Spirit, will not be able to do so if he does not try to exercise with great care the following four warnings, which are: i. Resignation; ii. mortification; iii. exercises of virtue; iv. corporal and spiritual solitude.

 NOTICE ONE

2, To keep the first thing, which is resignation, it is fitting for him to live in the monastery in such a way as if another person did not live in it; and thus, he should never interfere, neither in word nor in thought, in the things that happen in the community, nor in those of individuals; And even if the world should sink, he should not want to notice or meddle with them, to keep the peace of his soul, remembering Lot's wife, who, because she turned her head to look at the cries and noise of those who were perishing, turned into a hard stone. This she must keep with great strength, because by it she will be freed from many sins and imperfections and will keep the peace and quiet of her soul with great advantage before God and men. And this is to be observed very much, because it is so important that, because many religious did not keep it, not only did they never show off the works of

virtue and religion that they did, but they always went backwards from bad to worse. SECOND NOTICE

3. In order to do the second and to profit by it, which is mortification, it is very important for him to put this truth in his heart, namely, that he has come to the convent only to be worked and exercised in virtue, and that he is like a stone, which must be polished and worked before it is set in the building. And so he is to understand that all those who are in the convent are only officers whom God has placed there to work and polish him in mortification; and that some are to work him with words, telling him what he would not like to hear; others, with works, doing against him what he would not like to suffer; others, with conditions, being annoying and heavy in themselves and in their way of proceeding; others, with their thoughts, feeling that they are not in the convent, and others, with their thoughts, feeling that they are in the convent; And all these mortifications and annoyances he must suffer with interior patience, keeping silent for the love of God, understanding that he did not come to religion for anything else but to be laboured over and thus be worthy of heaven; that if it were not for this, there was no reason to come to religion, but to be in the world seeking its consolation, honor and credit, and its breadth. 4. And this second warning is absolutely necessary for the religious to fulfill his state and to find true humility, interior quietude and joy in the Holy Spirit. And if he does not exercise it in this way, he does not know how to be a religious, nor even what he came to religion for, nor does he know how to seek Christ, but only himself; nor will he find peace in his soul, nor will he cease to sin and be troubled many times; for occasions will never be lacking in religion, nor does God want them to be lacking; for as he brings souls there to be tested and purified, like gold with fire and hammer, so it is fitting that trials and temptations of men and demons, fire of anguish and discomforts, should not be

lacking. In these things the religious must exercise himself, always trying to bear them with patience and in conformity with the will of God, and not to bear them in such a way that, instead of God approving him in his approval, he will be reproved for not having wanted to bear the cross of Christ with patience. Because many religious who have come to this do not understand, they suffer others badly, and at the time of the reckoning they will find themselves very confused and mocked. THIRD NOTICE

5. To work the third thing, which is the exercise of virtue, it is good for him to have constancy in working the things of his religion and obedience without any respect of the world, but only for God; and to do this in this way and without

He should never set his eyes on the pleasure or displeasure that is offered in the work, to do it or not to do it, but on the reason for doing it for God's sake. And so he must do all things, whether tasty or unpalatable, with this sole end in view, that he may serve God with them. 6. And. in order to work hard and with this constancy and to come forth quickly with the virtues, let him always be careful to incline himself more to what is difficult than to what is easy, to what is rough than to what is smooth, and to what is difficult and unpleasant than to what is tasty and tasty, and not to go about choosing what is less of a cross, because it is a light burden; and the heavier the burden, the lighter it is borne by God. Let him also always see to it that his brethren are preferred to him in all comforts, always putting himself in the lowest place, and this very heartily; for this is the way to be greater in spiritual things, as God tells us in his Gospel: Qui se humiliat exaltabitur (Le 14:11). AVXSO FOURTH

7. To work the fourth thing, which is solitude, it is good for him to have all the things of the world as finished; and so, when he is no longer able to deal with them, let him do so with as little difficulty as if they were not so. 8. And let him take no account of things out there, for God has taken him away from them and neglected him; and whatever business he may be able to deal with by a third person, let him not do it by himself, for it is very much to his advantage; nor should he wish to see anyone, or have anyone see him. And let him be well advised that if God will ask of any of the faithful a close account for an idle word, how much more will he ask of the religious, who has his life and works consecrated to God, all of them on the day of his account? 9. I do not mean by this that he should cease to do the office he has, and any other that obedience may command him, with all possible and necessary diligence; but that he should do it in such a way that nothing of fault may be attached to it, because neither God nor obedience wills it. For this, let him try to be continual in prayer, and in the midst of the corporal exercises, let him not leave it; whether he eats, or drinks, or talks, or deals with laymen, or does anything else, let him always go about desiring God and making his heart fond of him; which is something very necessary for interior solitude, in which it is necessary not to leave the soul for any thought that is not directed to God, and in forgetfulness of all the things that are and happen in this miserable and brief life. In no way does he want to know anything, but only how he will serve God more and keep the things of his institute better. If he keeps his charity with care in these four things, he will be perfect very soon; and they help one another in such a way that, if in one he lacks what he is gaining and profiting by the others, he loses it by the one in which he lacks it.

1. Not to commit any sin as far as there is in the world, nor to knowingly commit any venial sin, nor any known imperfection. 2. To strive to walk always in the presence of

God, either real, or imaginary and/or unitive, according to one's works, according to one's compassion. 3. Not to do anything or say any notable word that Christ would not have said or done if he were in the state that I am in and had the age and health that I have. 4.

In all things seek the greater honor and glory of God.

5. soul.

For no occupation should we abandon mental prayer, which is the sustenance of the

6. Not to leave the examination of conscience because of one's occupations, and for each fault to do some penance. 7. To have great sorrow for any time lost or that is spent in which he does not love God. 8. In all things high and low, let him have God as his goal; otherwise he will not grow in perfection and merit. 9. Never fail in prayer; and when he has dryness and difficulty, by the same token, persevere in it; because God often wants to see what he has in his soul; which is not proved in ease and taste. 10. minimum,

Of heaven and earth always the lowest and the lowest place and office.

11. Never interfere in what is not commanded, nor trust in anything, even if he is the one who is right; and in what is commanded, if they give him the foot (as they say), do not take the hand, because some are deceived in this, understanding that they are obliged to do what nothing obliges them to do, if they would look at it well. 12. Never take account of other people's things, good or bad, because,

besides the danger of sinning, it is a cause of distractions and low spirits. Even though the things of his duty and office may be difficult and hard for him, let him not lose heart in them, because it will not always be so; and God, who tries the soul by pretending to work at the precept, will gradually make him feel the good and the gain from it. 15. Let him always remember that everything that passes through him, whether prosperous or adverse, comes from God, so that he may not be proud in the one, nor lose heart in the other. 16. Let him always remember how he came only to be a saint, and so let nothing reign in his soul that does not lead to holiness. 17. Let him always be more of a friend to others than to himself, and so he will not be envious of or possessive of his neighbor. This is to be understood as far as perfection is concerned, for God is very angry with those who do not put what pleases him before the good of men.

1. The earth that is not tilled will bear thorns and thistles even though it is fertile; so is the understanding of man. 2. Of all spiritual things speak well, as of religious, priests, and hermits. 3. Among many, always speak little. 4.

To be modest in all things she does and deals with.

5.

Never be overly zealous, especially in things that go little.

6.

Speak to everyone with moderate cheerfulness.

7.

Nothing to make fun of.

V. Cautions and notices

8. Never reprimand anyone without discretion and humility and self-confusion. 9. To adapt herself to the complexion of the person with whom she is dealing: with the cheerful, cheerful, and with the sad, sad; in short, to do everything to everyone in order to win them all over. 10. Never speak without thinking it over, and commend him much to Our Lord, so that he may not speak anything that displeases Him. 11.

Never excuse oneself, except in very probable cause.

12. Never say anything of yours worthy of praise, as of your science, virtues, lineage, if you do not hope that there will be profit, and then be with humility and with consideration that those are gifts from the hand of God. 13. feels,

Never make things too expensive, but in moderation say what you think is best.

14. In all talks and conversations always mix in some spiritual things, and by this you will avoid idle talk and backbiting. 15.

Never affirm anything without knowing it first.

he said. He should never presume to give his opinion in all things unless he is asked to do so, or unless charity demands it. 17. When someone speaks spiritual things, let him listen to them with humility and as a disciple, and take for himself what is good that he says. 18. To your superior and confessor discover all your temptations, imperfections and repugnances, so that he may give you advice and a remedy to overcome them. 19. Do not stay out of the cell or go out without cause, and on leaving, ask God’s favor so as not to offend him. Do not eat or drink except at the usual

hours, and then give many thanks to God. 21. Do all things as if you were really seeing His Majesty, and by this means a soul gains a great deal. 22. Never hear or speak evil of anyone, except of yourself; and when you enjoy this, you are making good use of it. 23. Every work that thou doest, direct it to God, offering it to him, and ask him that it may be for his honor and glory. 24. When you rejoice, do not laugh too much, but rejoice with humble, modest, affable and edifying joy. 25. Always imagine yourself the servant of all, and in all consider Christ our Lord, and thus you will have respect and reverence for him. 26. Be always ready to do obedience, as if Jesus Christ were commanding you in your prior or prelate. 27. In every work and hour, examine your conscience and, having seen your faults, seek amendment through divine favor, and in this way you will attain perfection. 28.

Think not of other people's faults, but of your own virtues and faults.

29. Always walk with a great desire to suffer for Christ in everything and on every occasion. 30. Make fifty offerings of himself to God every day, and do this with great fervor and desire for God. 31. What he meditates on in the morning, let him keep in mind all day long; and in this he should be very diligent, for there is great profit in it.

32. Let him keep very much the sentiments that the Lord communicates to him, and put into practice the desires that he gives him in prayer* 33. 34. The ordinances and rules of his religion, let him read them many times and keep them faithfully. 35. In all things that are created, let him look to

God’s providence and wisdom, and in all things let him praise Him. 36.

Detach your heart from all things and seek and you will find God.

37. Never show outward devotion that is not present within; but it may well conceal indevotion. 38. Let him show interior devotion only with great necessity. My secret for me, say St. Francis and St. Bernard. 39. Let him not complain about food, whether it is well or badly cooked, remembering the gall and vinegar of Jesus Christ. 40.

At the table, do not talk to anyone or raise your eyes to look at anyone else.

41. Consider the table of heaven and the food on it, which is God, and the guests, which are the angels: raise your eyes to that table, desiring to see yourself at it. 42. Before his superior, in whom he should look at Jesus Christ, let him never speak except what is necessary, and with great reverence. 43.

Never do anything that you cannot do in front of everyone.

44.

Do not compare one to the other, because it is an odious thing to do.

45. When you are reprimanded for something, receive it with interior and exterior humility, and pray to God for the one who reprimanded you. 46. When a superior commands one thing, do not say that another commands the contrary, but think that all have holy ends, and obey what he commands you. 47. In things that do not concern you, do not be curious to talk about them or ask questions about them. 48. Let her

keep in mind her past life to mourn for it, and her present lukewarmness, and what she has yet to go from here to heaven, so that she may live in fear, which is the cause of great good. 49. Always do what those at home tell you, if it is not contrary to obedience, and answer them with humility and gentleness. 50. He should only ask for food or clothing when he is in great need. 51. Never cease to humble and mortify himself to the point of death in all things. 52. Use always to make many acts of love, because they enkindle and inflame the soul. 53.

Make acts of all the other virtues.

54. Offer all things to the Eternal Father, together with the merits of his son Jesus Christ. 55. 56. as give. 57.

Let her be gentle with all, and with herself rigorous. On the feasts of the saints, let her think of her virtues and ask the Lord to be with great care in her nightly examination.

58. On the day he receives communion, let his prayer be to see that, being so wretched, he will receive God; and his prayer at night, that he has received him. 59. Never, being a superior, reprove anyone in anger, but only when it is past, and thus he will profit from the reprimand. 60. Strive much for perfection and devotion, and with them do all things. 61. Exercise much in the fear of the Lord, which brings the soul to be compunctionate and humbled. 62. See well how quickly people change and how little one has to trust them, and thus hold fast to God, who does not change. 63. In the affairs of his soul, let him seek a spiritual and learned confessor to whom he will communicate them and follow them in everything. 64. Whenever he receives Holy

Communion, let him ask God for some gift for the great mercy with which he has come to his poor soul. 65. Even if he has many saints as his advocates, let him be particularly devoted to St. Joseph, who obtains much from God. 66. In times of sadness and trouble, do not give up the good works of prayer and penance that you used to do, because the devil tries to trouble you to give them up; but rather do more than you used to do, and you will see how much the Lord favors you. 67. Do not communicate your temptations and imperfections with the most unprofitable ones at home, or you will harm yourself and the others, but with the most perfect ones. 68. Remember that thou hast not more than one soul, nor must thou die more than once, nor hast thou more than one brief life, and one, which is particular, nor is there more than one glory, and that eternal, and thou shalt give thy hand to many things. 69. Your desire is to see God; your fear, if you will lose Him; your sorrow, that you do not enjoy Him, and your joy of what may lead you there, and you will live in great peace.

INDEX

ANALYTICAL

It is like a second baptism. It is in a certain way equivalent to martyrdom. It constitutes a true holocaust of oneself. It constitutes a true consecration.

182 184 186 187

Analytical Index Part Three

667 pdgs.

192 194 201 203 204 205 205 206 209 210 211 212 213

The spirit and the letter. Faith in the rule.

214 215

a) b)

215 217

Sanctity of the regia. Authority of the regia.

Confidence in the rule....

218

a) b)

The certainties of compliance... The risks of non-compliance.

218 219

Love of the rule. a) The love of the rule. b) The rule for love.
The external cult of the rule.

223 223 225 22O

a) b)

226 228

Delicacies of observance. The martyrdom of observance.

Enemies of observance.

230

a) b)

Church. III. Vatican Council II, Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life. IV, The cloistered discipline. V. Cautions and warnings of St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Jesus.

59° 59^ ooi 620 623 633 654

INDEX The figures

DE

Religious life

MATERIALS

refer to the marginal numbers

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